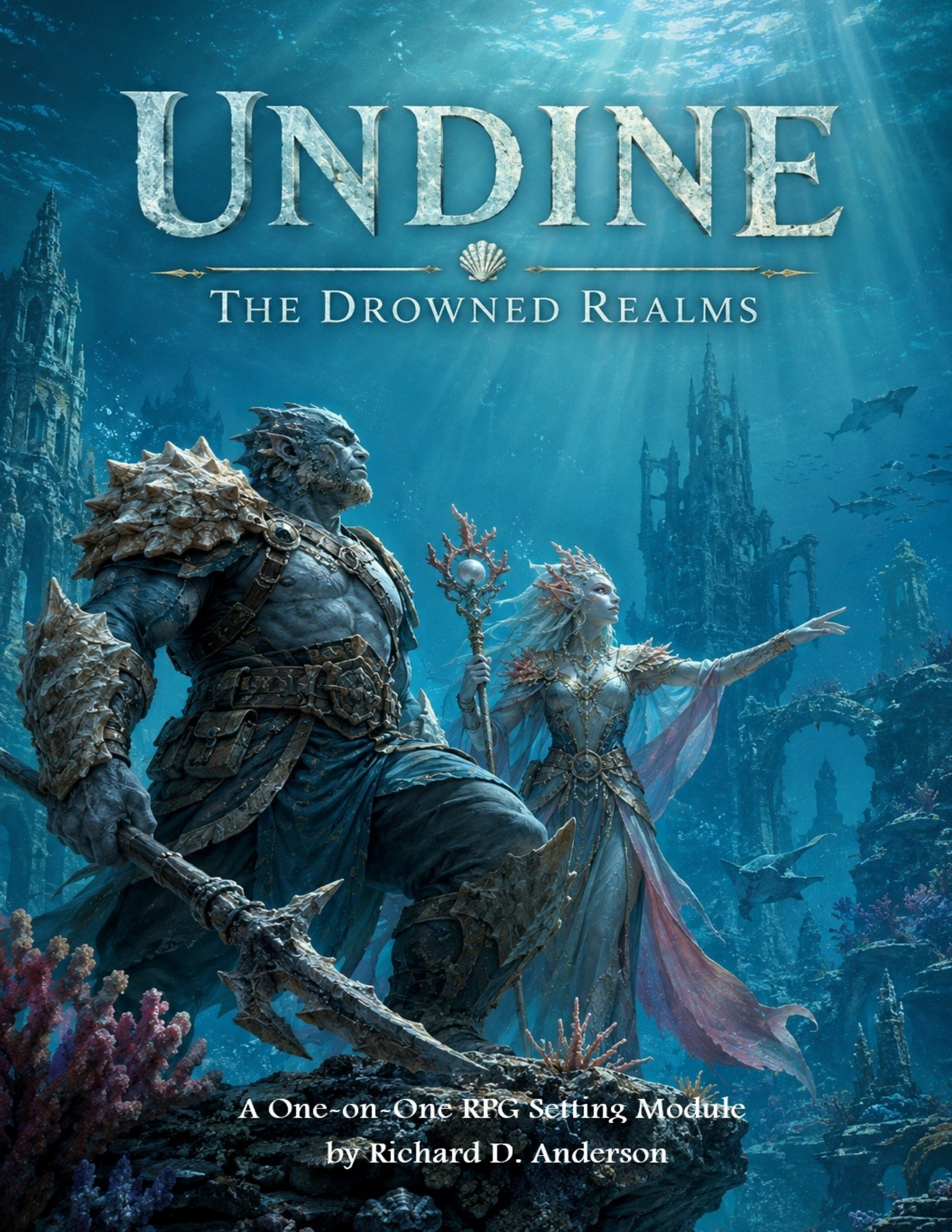
UNDINE

The Drowned Realms



A One-on-One RPG Setting Module

by Richard D. Anderson

UNDINE: The Drowned Realms

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Designer's Note:

Undine: The Drowned Realms is an ancient underwater fantasy setting built around a world transformed by a nearly forgotten magical apocalypse. Thousands of years after the Deluge, the old surface world has become myth, ruin, warning, and treasure. The living cultures of the Drowned Realms have adapted to pressure, current, depth, darkness, reef, and the strange arcane aftereffects left behind by the catastrophe that reshaped everything.

Player characters belong to the Bloodtides, the major water-native peoples of the setting. They are not surface dwellers struggling to survive underwater. They are fully adapted to life beneath the sea. All Protagonists are capable of basic swimming, underwater movement, and close-range speech underwater. These essential capabilities are assumed as part of life in the Drowned Realms and do not require special rules or skill investment.

At its heart, Undine is about exploration beneath the memory of disaster. It is a setting of living reefs, pressure gates, leviathan routes, coral courts, kelpway clans, abyssal settlements, sealed domes, ancient relics, and old magic that never fully died. The sea is not a backdrop. It is home, wilderness, battlefield, archive, and threat.

Undine: The Drowned Realms

Introduction: Beneath the World That Was

The world did not end in fire. It drowned.

The old stories disagree on almost everything else. The Coral Courts say the dry empires grew proud and tried to command the sea. The Shellhold Bastions teach that the old world failed because its builders trusted wonder more than maintenance. The Arkborn keep sealed records that suggest a stranger truth. The Kelpway Clans tell children that the world survived because it learned to bend. The Abyssal Kin know that something waited below the first waters long before the Deluge. The Leviathan-Tide Peoples say the great beasts changed their routes before the sky broke, and that should have been warning enough.

Thousands of years have passed since the Deluge. The Drowned Realms are not a temporary ruin. They are the world.

Cities glow in reeflight. Fortresses cling to pressure shelves. Kelp forests stretch like living roads through greenwater shallows. Arkborn domes preserve old names behind glass, shell, and reinforced stone. Deep settlements watch the Black Reaches with patient fear. Beyond them lie the Hadal Wounds, where the sea grows colder, stranger, and less willing to obey ordinary law.

No one alive remembers the dry world. Some Bloodtides preserve fragments of it. Some curse it. Some worship its remains. Most know it only through ruin, relic, and inherited blame.

This is the age after the apocalypse has become history. It is not safe. It is not primitive. It is not broken in any simple way. The Drowned Realms are old, political, beautiful, and dangerous. Their people have had millennia to build laws, grudges, trade routes, houses, cults, and rituals around the fact that the sea won.

Yet the Deluge is not finished. Its magic still leaks through the world.

A reef may begin to dream. A child may be born with glass veins. A pressure gate may open onto a chamber that should not exist. A harmless beast may return from a ruin with new eyes and a hunger for pearls. A sealed Arkborn vault may exhale dry air after ten centuries of silence. A trench may widen without earthquake or current. In the deepest waters, old things move.

Undine is a setting of wonder shaped by disaster. It is a world of aquatic peoples and drowned

powers. It is a place where every descent carries risk, where light is political, where pressure is law, and where ancient magic is both inheritance and wound.

A One-on-One RPG Setting

Undine: The Drowned Realms is designed for the One-on-One RPG System. At its center is one Director and one Protagonist. This matters. The world is vast, but the story follows a single heroic figure closely.

The Protagonist may be a Coral Court envoy sent into hostile waters, a Shellhold Pressure Mason trying to save a failing gate, a Kelpway Current Guide protecting a forbidden route, an Arkborn Relic Scholar searching for truth inside drowned vaults, a Gloam-Eyed Seer watching the deep for signs of awakening powers, or a Leviathan-Tide Harpoon Champion drawn into a migration crisis larger than any one clan.

The One-on-One structure gives each of these figures room to matter. Their Bloodtide is not background decoration. Their culture affects how people greet them, mistrust them, hire them, test them, and remember them. Their Archetype tells the Director what kind of heroic pressure to place on them. Their choices can alter a settlement, expose a hidden history, open a sealed route, or awaken something that should have stayed buried.

The core One-on-One rules remain intact. Undine does not replace the d100 engine. It adds setting tools around it.

Tests and Contests still resolve danger and uncertainty. Skill values remain the basis for Target Numbers. Advantage and Disadvantage still handle the changing pressures of circumstance. Destiny remains the Protagonist's ability to push fate when the moment matters. Degree of Success and Degree of Failure still determine how cleanly an action succeeds, how badly it fails, or how much ground is won in a difficult exchange. Clocks remain vital for pressure exposure, ruin collapse, arcane mutation, political crisis, pursuit, ritual completion, and environmental disaster.

Undine's mechanics should make the drowned world feel different without making the system heavy. A bad current is not a separate rules engine. It is Disadvantage, forced movement, or a Clock. Poor light is not a page of visibility rules. It is uncertainty, concealment, and risk. Extreme pressure is not constant arithmetic. It becomes danger when the story makes it matter.

The setting's signature spatial tool is the Three-Plane Hex. Underwater action is not flat. A threat may come from above, below, behind, or from a lower angle hidden by silt. The Three-Plane Hex gives the Director a simple way to place danger in three-dimensional space. It can determine where a predator strikes from, where a current pushes the Protagonist, where debris falls, where a light fails, or where a rupture opens.

The d20 used for this tool is not a replacement for the d100 system. It is a spatial oracle. It gives the underwater world shape.

The Bloodtides

The peoples of Undine are known as Bloodtides. A Bloodtide is ancestry, body, culture, adaptation, and myth carried through generations after the Deluge. Most Bloodtides have a distinctive physical form. Those forms are not costumes. They are the result of survival in a world of salt, pressure, arcane residue, living reef, old ruin, and depth.

The Coral Courts are reef-born nobles of cultivated cities and legal memory. The Kelpway

Clans are greenwater wanderers of living routes and hidden growth. The Shellhold Bastions are armored builders and defenders of pressure-scarred settlements. The Arkborn descend from sealed refuges and carry dangerous fragments of the old world. The Leviathan-Tide Peoples move with vast creatures across open water. The Abyssal Kin are the exception to the pattern: a broad family of deepwater peoples rather than one single form, including the Gloam-Eyed, the Blackfin Houses, and darker cultures feared by nearly all.

A Protagonist's Bloodtide shapes play in several ways. It gives them a body suited to certain environments. It gives them a people and a history. It gives them inherited enemies, expected duties, and old lies. It affects how other Bloodtides react before the Protagonist says a word.

A Shellhold hero entering a Coral Court palace may be treated as blunt, useful, and politically crude. A Coral Court envoy at a Bastion gate may be seen as elegant trouble. An Arkborn scholar may be welcomed for their knowledge and watched for their secrets. A Gloam-Eyed traveler in the upper realms may be blamed for things that came from deeper waters. A Leviathan-Tide hunter may be honored as a guest and resented as someone who will never stay long enough to share the consequences.

These attitudes should not be simple hatred. The Drowned Realms are too old for that. Trade, marriage, rescue, betrayal, pilgrimage, and war have woven the Bloodtides together for millennia. Most people know at least one story that confirms their prejudice and another that complicates it.

Magic After the Deluge

Magic is everywhere in Undine, but it is not always trusted.

The Deluge was arcane in nature. Even cultures that disagree about its cause agree on that much. Some say the old dry empires built engines to command weather, tide, life, and death. Some say priests opened the wrong gates beneath the world. Some say the sea itself answered centuries of abuse. Others whisper that the Deluge was an act of containment, a desperate drowning of something worse.

Whatever the truth, magic did not leave after the waters rose. It entered the food chain. It settled into coral beds. It marked bloodlines. It seeped into pressure faults and old vaults. It changed beasts, plants, ruins, and children. It became part of the world's ecology.

This creates a divided attitude toward magic. The Coral Courts use formal reef sorcery and pearl

rites, but even they fear wild mutation. The Kelpway Clans rely on living remedies and greenwater rites, yet many of their elders warn against magic that does not know when to stop growing. The Shellhold Bastions value practical craft above wonder. Their masons say that a miracle that cannot be repaired is only a delayed disaster. The Arkborn preserve relic knowledge, but their best vault laws begin with prohibitions. The Abyssal Kin know forms of pressure-working and deep omen-craft that upper realms barely understand. Some of them use this knowledge with restraint. Others surrender to powers that should have remained nameless. The Leviathan-Tide Peoples treat magic as something measured against migration, beast behavior, and omen. If a working disturbs the routes of great creatures, it has already gone too far.

Arcane mutation is a constant risk. A person may be Brinemarked by contaminated water. Coralbound by living reef growth. Glassblooded by a relic fracture. Gloomtouched by blackwater exposure. Tidewarped by unstable currents of old magic. Pearl-Haunted by memory growths that speak in dreams.

Some mutations can be survived. Some can be treated. Some become gifts with a cost. Others are the first step toward monstrosity.

Undine's dark fantasy does not come from hopelessness. It comes from inheritance. The world is beautiful, but beauty has teeth. The past is buried, but burial is not the same as death.

Deepworks and Drowned Craft

The Drowned Realms are not without technology. They are not a world of simple tools and helpless superstition. Their craft is old, specialized, and shaped by water.

Deepworks is the broad name for the quasi-magical infrastructure and craft traditions that allow civilization to exist beneath the sea. It includes Pressurecraft, Ventcraft, Reefwork, and Reliccraft. It is not science in the modern sense. It is not industrial mastery. It is a body of dangerous craft knowledge maintained by guilds, houses, shrines, and sealed orders.

A pressure gate can hold back lethal depth changes between districts. A current lift can carry travelers through a vertical settlement. A vent engine can warm a forge, drive a pump, or power a gate that would be impossible to move by muscle alone. A brine filter can keep a city from poisoning itself. A coral memory wall can preserve testimony for centuries. A pressure bell can carry a small crew through hostile depth for a short time. A shell-skiff, current-sled, or harnessed ray-cart can move goods along known routes, though none of these make travel safe.

The limits are important. Deepworks does not erase the setting's dangers. It makes survival possible in places that remain dangerous. Gates fail. Pumps clog. Vents shift. Living coral becomes infected. Old relic systems awaken with commands no one remembers. Vehicles need routes, handlers, maintenance, and luck.

The Shellhold Bastions are the masters of practical Pressurecraft. The Arkborn understand sealed systems and old vault mechanisms better than anyone else. The Coral Courts cultivate living architecture and ritualized reef systems. The Kelpway Clans prefer lighter living craft that can move, heal, or be abandoned. The Leviathan-Tide Peoples use harnesses, anchors, route markers, and beast-borne platforms. The Abyssal Kin employ stranger deep structures, many of which

are grown, carved, or endured rather than built in the usual sense.

A Protagonist may use Deepworks as tool, obstacle, mystery, or battlefield. A Pressure Mason might save a city by repairing a cracking seal. A Domewright may recognize that an air vault is still alive in some half-understood way. A Ruin-Breaker may know when a beautiful mechanism is a trap. A Tide Magister may sense courtly Reefwork turning hostile around them.

The Drowned Realms were built from survival. They remain one failed seal away from catastrophe.

Ancient Things Below

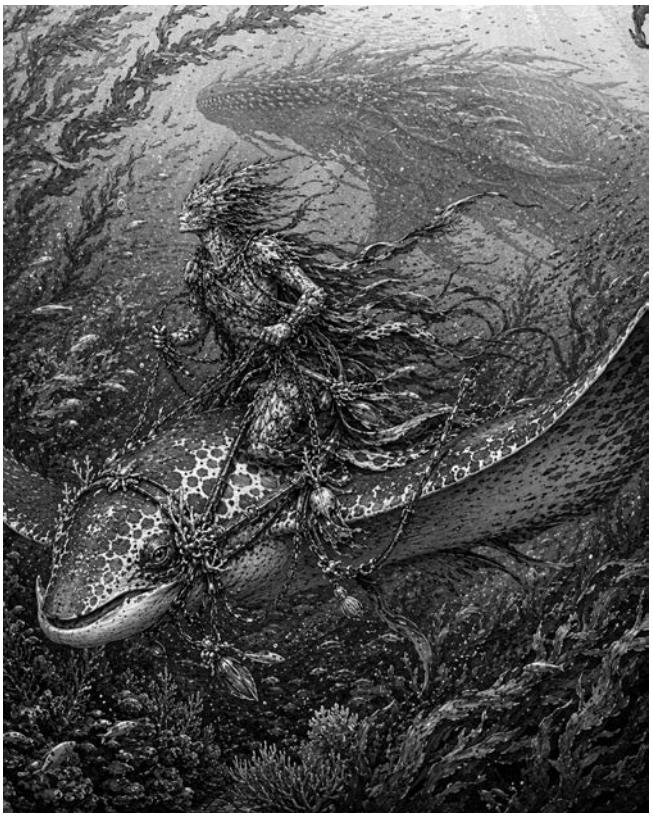
The deepest parts of the ocean are not empty. They are old.

Some things in the Hadal Wounds predate the Deluge. Some may predate the dry empires. Some may have been sleeping when the first surface city raised its walls. The Deluge did not create every horror. It revealed some. It fed others. It broke prisons. It buried warnings under silt.

The World-Eel is said to coil around the roots of drowned continents. Most sightings are only fragments: a moving wall of scale, a shed tooth, a pale eye opening in a trench. The Ultharic Spawn worship Ultharuun, the Sleeper Below the Silt, and believe the world has not yet descended far enough. The Ossune gather near mass death and carry grief in their wide pale bodies. The Mnemor stand as pearl-eyed witnesses in ruins that no longer have masters. The Corveth can turn a reef city into a single will.

These beings and creatures should not all be treated as monsters to fight. Some are sites of negotiation. Some are disasters. Some are mysteries. Some are proof that the old world misunderstood the sea from the beginning.

In Undine, the deepest truth is rarely found in a book. It waits in black water, under pressure, where light fails.



Chapter One: Character Creation

A Protagonist in **Undine: The Drowned Realms** is not simply an adventurer who happens to live underwater. They are a child of a drowned world. Their body belongs to pressure, current, depth, and living water. Their culture carries the memory of survival after catastrophe. Their choices may open old vaults, calm leviathans, cure mutations, expose court lies, guard failing gates, or descend into places where the sea itself seems afraid.

This chapter gives the steps for creating a Protagonist for play. The full One-on-One RPG rules are provided in **Appendix A: One-on-One RPG Rules Reference**. Use that appendix whenever a rule needs more detail. This chapter focuses on the choices that make an Undine character belong to the Drowned Realms.

A Protagonist is created through the following steps:

1. Select Bloodtide
2. Select Archetype
3. Determine Primary Attributes
4. Determine Essence
5. Select Skills and determine base values
6. Distribute Skill Points
7. Record starting Destiny
8. Determine Starting Gear and Money
9. Select or generate a Companion

Step One: Select Bloodtide

Your **Bloodtide** is your people, form, culture, and place in the drowned world. It is not only ancestry. It shapes how others see you, what waters feel like home, what dangers your body understands, and what old arguments you inherit.

The core Bloodtides are:

- **Coral Courts**
- **Kelpway Clans**
- **Shellhold Bastions**
- **Abyssal Kin**
- **Arkborn**
- **Leviathan-Tide Peoples**

Each Bloodtide has its own chapter. Read the overview, physical description, society, beliefs, relationships, and cultural Trait before choosing. Some Bloodtides are tied to specific depth bands. Some are trusted in certain regions and feared in

others. Some carry old authority. Some carry old suspicion.

Your Bloodtide gives you a cultural foundation. It may suggest your native depth, appearance, likely upbringing, social obligations, and starting story hooks.

A Coral Court Protagonist may begin play as a court agent, duelist, envoy, or mage caught between beauty and power. A Kelpway Protagonist may come from living routes where survival depends on growth, motion, and trust. A Shellhold Protagonist may be shaped by duty, craft, gates, and the hard courage of defense. An Abyssal Kin Protagonist may bring the silence and pressure of the deep into upper waters that do not understand them. An Arkborn Protagonist may carry old records, sealed guilt, and dangerous keys. A Leviathan-Tide Protagonist may treat home as a route rather than a city.

Choose the Bloodtide that best fits the kind of story you want to tell.

Step Two: Select Archetype

Your **Archetype** is your starting heroic role within your Bloodtide. It is not a rigid class. It is a cultural path, training background, and set of expectations.

Each Bloodtide presents three Archetypes.

Coral Court Archetypes

- **Reef Duelist**
- **Pearl Envoy**
- **Tide Magister**

Kelpway Clan Archetypes

- **Current Guide**
- **Kelpstalker**
- **Green-Tide Healer**

Shellhold Bastion Archetypes

- **Shellguard**
- **Ruin-Breaker**
- **Pressure Mason**

Abyssal Kin Archetypes

- **Trench Scout**
- **Pressure Monk**
- **Abyssal Seer**

Arkborn Archetypes

- **Relic Scholar**
- **Vault Warden**
- **Domewright**

Leviathan-Tide Archetypes

- **Beast-Speaker**
- **Harpoon Champion**
- **Migration Oracle**

Your Archetype provides six recommended Starting Skills and starting equipment. It also gives the Director a clear sense of what kinds of problems naturally find your character.

A Reef Duelist is pulled into challenges, honor disputes, and court violence. A Green-Tide Healer is drawn toward sickness, mutation, mercy, and hard choices. A Pressure Mason belongs near failing structures and impossible repairs. A Relic Scholar finds doors that should perhaps remain closed. A Migration Oracle sees route signs no one else wants to believe.

You may customize your character beyond the Archetype. The Archetype is a strong starting point, not a cage.

Step Three: Determine Primary Attributes

Undine uses the standard six Primary Attributes of the One-on-One RPG System.

- **Might**
- **Grace**
- **Endurance**
- **Awareness**
- **Intellect**
- **Presence**

Attributes measure broad capability. They also determine Skill base values.

Standard Array

Assign the following values to the six Attributes:

70, 65, 60, 55, 50, 45

This method is fast and balanced.

Point Allocation

Assign **345 total points** among the six Attributes.

Minimum Attribute: **40**
Maximum starting Attribute: **80**

This method gives more control.

When assigning Attributes, think about your Bloodtide and Archetype, but do not feel trapped by them. A Shellguard likely values Might and Endurance. A Pearl Envoy may favor Presence and Intellect. A Kelpstalker may rely on Grace and Awareness. A Domewright may require Intellect and Concentration of purpose. A Harpoon Champion may need Might, Grace, and Endurance.

The drowned world rewards specialization, but it punishes neglect. Even a scholar may need to swim through a collapsing vault. Even a warrior may need to understand a warning before striking it.

Step Four: Determine Essence

Essence measures a character's inner magical capacity, spiritual strength, or connection to the forces that shape the Drowned Realms.

In Undine, Essence may represent formal arcane training, living route connection, ancestral memory, abyssal pressure, reef-bonded discipline, or old-world inheritance. A Tide Magister and a Green-Tide Healer may both use Essence, but the fiction behind their power is very different.

Use the standard Essence rule for the One-on-One RPG System unless the Director specifies otherwise.

Essence Maximum = **Presence ÷ 2, rounded up**

A character does not need to be a spellcaster for Essence to matter. Essence may be used for magic, certain special abilities, supernatural effects, or setting-specific powers as defined by the rules and Archetypes.

Characters with **Formal Magic** or **Wild Magic** should record their Essence carefully. Spellcasting costs Essence. A spell may fail, but the cost is still paid unless a specific rule says otherwise.

Step Five: Select Skills and Determine Base Values

Skills represent trained ability. They are more specific than Attributes and are the main values used when the Protagonist takes uncertain action.

Each Skill has a linked Attribute. The Skill Base is determined by the linked Attribute.

Skill Base = **linked Attribute ÷ 2, rounded down**

For example, if a Skill is linked to Intellect and the character has Intellect 65, that Skill begins with a base of 32 before Skill Points are added.

Your Archetype lists six Starting Skills. These are the Skills most closely tied to the role. You may select them first, then add any additional Skills allowed by the Director and the character creation rules.

Some Skills are especially important to Undine:

- **Currentcraft** handles underwater movement, current-reading, and three-dimensional positioning.
- **Depth Lore** helps characters understand depth bands, pressure regions, and deepwater dangers.
- **Deepworks** covers underwater infrastructure, pressure gates, brine pumps, vent engines, and functioning systems.
- **Relic Lore** covers pre-Deluge artifacts, sealed ruins, old-world warnings, and ancient devices.
- **Cartography** covers maps, route charts, depth diagrams, gate records, and regional planning.
- **Formal Magic** and **Wild Magic** are the two magic Skills used in this module.

A Skill's base value does not mean the character is trained in that Skill. It represents natural aptitude from the linked Attribute. Skill Points show real investment.

Step Six: Distribute Skill Points

During character creation, the Protagonist receives **200 Skill Points**.

Each Skill Point adds **+1%** to a Skill.

The recommended starting Skill cap is **70%**, unless the Director approves an exception.

This cap helps starting Protagonists feel capable without beginning as masters of every field. A focused character may still be very strong in their chosen role. A Pressure Mason can begin with excellent Deepworks. A Reef Duelist can begin as a serious blade fighter. A Green-Tide Healer can begin play with strong Medicine, Herbalism, and Wild Magic.

When spending Skill Points, think about what the character can do during play.

A strong Undine character usually has:

- one or two excellent role-defining Skills;
- several reliable supporting Skills;
- at least one way to survive travel or danger;
- one social, knowledge, or perception option that fits the concept.

A purely combat-focused character may struggle in vaults, courts, and pressure routes. A purely scholarly character may struggle when a predator rises from below. One-on-One play rewards breadth, but it also rewards a clear identity.

Step Seven: Record Starting Destiny

Destiny represents the Protagonist's ability to push beyond ordinary chance when the moment matters.

Use the standard starting Destiny rule from Appendix A.

Destiny may be spent according to the One-on-One RPG rules. In play, Destiny can reflect courage, luck, ancestral favor, sheer will, divine attention, narrative force, or the character's refusal to be taken by the deep.

In Undine, Destiny often appears at turning points:

- a last defense at a failing gate;
- a desperate swim through blackwater;
- a formal duel before pearl witnesses;
- a healing rite before mutation takes hold;
- a choice to open or seal an ancient vault;
- a warning spoken before a leviathan turns;
- a strike against something from the Hadal Wounds.

Record Destiny clearly. It is one of the Protagonist's most important resources.

Step Eight: Determine Starting Gear and Money

Each Archetype provides starting equipment. This gear reflects the character's training, culture, and expected role.

A Shellguard begins with armor and a shield suited to defense. A Relic Scholar begins with tools for records and relics. A Kelpstalker begins with stealth gear and hunting tools. A Tide Magister begins with formal magical implements. A Beast-Speaker begins with route and creature-handling equipment.

The Director may adjust gear to fit the character's Bloodtide, body shape, settlement, and campaign frame.

Starting money is determined by the player's Archetype as well. Undine uses shell-based currency:

- **Pale Shells**
- **Rose Shells**
- **Moon Shells**
- **Crown Shells**
- **Sovereign Shells**

A poor wanderer, court agent, Shellhold guard, Arkborn scholar, and Leviathan-Tide route mystic should not all begin with the same wealth unless the campaign calls for it.

Starting money will matter most when the Protagonist needs supplies, guides, alchemical preparations, repairs, tolls, mounts, safe passage, or access to restricted places.

Step Nine: Select or Generate a Companion

One-on-One RPG play often uses a **Companion** to support the Protagonist. In Undine, a Companion might be a loyal person, trained animal, small pet, mount, assistant, oath-bound guard, guide, apprentice, or strange creature tied to the character's story.

A Companion is not a second Protagonist. They are lighter, simpler, and focused on support. The full Companion rules appear in Appendix A.

A Companion may help by:

- assisting Skill Tests;
- warning of danger;
- protecting the Protagonist;
- carrying messages;
- guiding travel;
- supporting healing;
- maintaining equipment;
- acting as a social connection;
- giving the Director a voice in scenes that might otherwise feel solitary.

Possible Undine Companions include:

- a Kelpway route sibling;
- a Shellhold shieldmate;
- an Arkborn archive assistant;
- a Coral Court page or witness-bearer;
- a Gloam-Eyed guide;
- a Leviathan-Tide beast-handler;
- a lantern fish;
- a messenger eel;
- a scent-ray pup;
- a reef glider;
- a trained ray mount;
- a stubborn shellback hauler;
- an inkling squid with bad habits.

A Companion should connect the Protagonist more deeply to the world. They may be loyal, troublesome, frightened, brave, secretive, or all of these at once.

Character Creation Summary

To create an Undine Protagonist:

1. **Select Bloodtide**
   Choose the culture and physical people your character belongs to.
2. **Select Archetype**
   Choose the character's starting role and heroic path.
3. **Determine Primary Attributes**
   Use the standard array or 345-point allocation.
4. **Determine Essence**
   Calculate Essence using the standard rule.
5. **Select Skills and determine base values**
   Use linked Attributes to calculate Skill Bases.
6. **Distribute Skill Points**
   Add 200 Skill Points. Observe the recommended starting cap of 70%.
7. **Record starting Destiny**
   Use the standard One-on-One RPG starting value.
8. **Determine Starting Gear and Money**
   Use Archetype gear, then add money as directed by the campaign.
9. **Select or generate a Companion**
   Choose a support character, creature, mount, or ally suited to the story.

Final Questions

Before play begins, answer a few questions about the Protagonist.

- What water feels like home?
- What depth makes them uneasy?
- Which Bloodtide do they trust least, and why?
- What old story did they grow up believing?
- What part of the Deluge do they fear is true?
- What would make them open a sealed door?
- What would make them refuse?

A Protagonist in Undine begins as one person in a drowned world filled with old wounds.

The story begins when the water moves.

Chapter Two: The Coral Courts

The Reef That Rules

The Coral Courts are the most beautiful powers in the Blue Realms, and among the most dangerous.

Their cities rise from cultivated reefs in towers of coral, nacre, shell, pearl, and shaped stone. Curtains of fish pass through open halls. Gardens glow in pink, jade, gold, violet, and white. Living bridges flex with the current. Walls remember legal testimony. Noble houses cultivate coral crests the way other peoples cultivate banners. A visitor may enter a court district and believe they have found peace.

That mistake has ended more than one embassy.

The Coral Courts are not gentle. They are ceremonial, exacting, proud, and patient. They believe civilization is a living thing. It must be grown. It must be cut back when diseased. It must be defended from ugliness, lawlessness, and decay. To a Coral Court noble, beauty is not decoration. It is proof of order.

Their cities dominate the upper Blue Realms and parts of the Sunlit Skin. The greatest among them is Pearlspire, seat of the old Reef Concord and still the finest court-city known to most travelers. Pearlspire's upper terraces shine pale rose and white in the shallower light. Its lower courts descend through blue-green shadow into old chambers where pearls the size of shields store annals from centuries past. No visitor sees all of Pearlspire. The city reveals itself by rank, oath, invitation, and political need.

The Coral Courts claim descent from the first reef survivors after the Deluge. Court histories speak of Ilvara the Bright-Handed, who shaped the first living wall around a refugee host while the old world's towers collapsed above them. They honor Soreth Pearl-Judge, who ended the Twelve House War with a duel of law instead of blades. They remember Avarin of the Shattered Crest, whose failed attempt to bind wild reef magic

created the Redbloom Scourge that still haunts certain districts and noble lines.

These figures are history, myth, warning, and political weapon. A house that claims Ilvara's favor may justify rule. A rival may cite Avarin's disgrace to suggest that the same blood is not safe near power.

No people in Undine use memory more artfully than the Coral Courts. No people edit it more carefully.

Physical Form

Coral Court folk are graceful aquatic humanoids with reef-born features. Their bodies often show signs of coral, nacre, shell, pearl, or cultivated reef growth. They are usually slender, poised, and controlled in movement, though warrior houses can produce powerful physiques beneath the elegance.

Common skin colors include pearl-white, coral pink, rose, sea-gold, turquoise, pale jade, lavender, deep reef-blue, soft gray, and blue-white. Noble bloodlines often cultivate recognizable hues. House Vaelor is known for pale skin with rose-gold coral branching at the brow. House Merathi favors blue-white nacre tones and silver eyes. House Oranth keeps deep turquoise markings along the shoulders and spine.

Coral growths appear along the brow, temples, shoulders, forearms, collarbones, spine, or ribs. These growths are rarely random in high society. They are shaped, trimmed, polished, and sometimes ritually encouraged. A noble's crest may show age, rank, house, marital ties, or magical training. Damaging another person's crest is a grave insult. Damaging it in public may demand a duel.

Their eyes are vivid. Amber, green, blue, violet, silver, gold, and black pearl are all common. Some Tide Magisters develop luminous rings around the pupil after years of formal reef magic. Hair varies widely. It may be fine and floating like pale sea-silk, thick and dark like wet kelp, or grown into soft coral-like tendrils. Some houses bind hair with pearl wire or living fronds that change color during court rites.

Fin-like ears, cheek frills, soft neck fans, and light webbing between the fingers are common. Court fashion emphasizes these traits. A formal mantle may leave the shoulders bare to display coral growth. A legal robe may be cut to frame luminous markings along the throat. A duelist's garment often bares one forearm to show the oath-crest before combat begins.

Coral Court bodies are suited to controlled movement in open water, reef corridors, and court spaces. They are less comfortable in brutal pressure changes, blackwater, and cramped industrial ruins. Many would deny this. A Shellhold guard would not.

Society and the Living City

Coral Court society is built around houses, oaths, reputation, cultivated memory, and ritual law. Every court city is a living political body. The reef is not scenery. It records, reacts, and sometimes judges.

A major Coral Court settlement is usually divided into rings or terraces. The outer districts hold markets, guest halls, craft beds, fishfolds, and public shrines. The middle courts contain house estates, legal gardens, duel platforms, and schools of etiquette. The inner courts belong to rulers, magistrates, Tide Magisters, and ancestral memory chambers. Lower chambers may contain

older reefs grown around pre-Deluge ruins, forbidden archives, or sealed sites where early court magic went wrong.

Law is formal and public. A spoken accusation made in the right chamber can carry more danger than a blade. Witness pearls record oaths and testimony. Coral memory walls preserve verdicts. Public gestures carry legal meaning. A hand placed on the wrong arch, a refusal to bow at a threshold, or an insult offered before a living witness-reef may begin a dispute that lasts years.

Court children are trained early in posture, address, family history, and controlled emotion. They learn who may be touched, who may be contradicted, and which compliments are veiled threats. They also learn that true power often hides behind patience.

The common folk of the Coral Courts are not all nobles. Reef cities need gardeners, masons of living coral, pearl divers, fishkeepers, scribes, escorts, builders, physicians, guards, messengers, and cleaners. Many are bound to houses by oath rather than blood. A skilled artisan may wield more practical influence than a minor noble. A beloved Pearl Envoy may save a house from war. A Tide Magister may terrify even the ruler who employs them.

Social mobility exists, but it is ritualized. A commoner may be adopted into a house, elevated by public service, or granted a crest after an act of extraordinary value. Such honors are never simple. They create new enemies, old resentments, and obligations that may last generations.

Rule Through Beauty

Outsiders often misunderstand Coral Court beauty. They mistake it for vanity. This is foolish.

To the Coral Courts, beauty is discipline made visible. A healthy reef shows order. A balanced hall shows proper authority. A clear pearl shows honest memory. A symmetrical crest shows good breeding and careful self-command. A city overrun by chaotic growth has failed in governance.

This belief gives the Courts great strength. Their cities are organized, impressive, and rich in symbolic power. Their ceremonies can unite thousands. Their legal memory can prevent old disputes from becoming open war. Their cultivated architecture can defend against predators, invaders, and current shifts.

It also gives them a dangerous blindness. They may hide rot because it is ugly. They may punish visible mutation while protecting a corrupt noble line. They may dismiss rougher peoples as lesser because Shellhold walls are plain, Kelpway camps move, and Abyssal settlements do not value light.

The Redbloom Scourge remains the great warning. In the eighth century after the Deluge, Avarin of the Shattered Crest attempted to bind a living reef district into perfect obedience. The rite succeeded for nine days. The district became beautiful beyond description. Every arch grew smooth. Every color brightened. Every citizen spoke with flawless courtesy.

On the tenth day, the coral began growing through bodies.

The district was sealed, burned with caustic brine, and cut away from the city. Some say fragments of the Redbloom remain alive. Others claim several

noble houses quietly preserved samples. No Court admits this.

Among the Shellhold Bastions, Avarin's Folly is taught as proof that beauty without maintenance becomes murder. Among the Arkborn, it is cited as a small echo of whatever caused the Deluge. Among the Coral Courts, it is discussed only in controlled chambers.

Magic and Distrust

The Coral Courts are one of the most openly magical Bloodtides. Their Tide Magisters are trained in formal sorcery, current law, pearl rite, reef warding, and ceremonial battlecraft. A Tide Magister may redirect water, bind an oath into a pearl, shield a chamber with flowing force, reveal hidden stains in a bloodline, or challenge another mage in a duel governed by court rule.

Yet the Courts do not trust all magic. They distinguish sharply between cultivated magic and wild magic. Cultivated magic is taught, witnessed, named, bounded, and recorded. Wild magic grows without permission. It mutates beasts. It infects coral. It leaks from ruins. It stains bloodlines without consent.

This distinction is comforting. It is not always true.

Some Coral Court families carry old arcane marks. A child may be born with luminous coral under the skin. A Tide Magister may hear a memory wall speak without being invoked. A noble crest may grow in a shape associated with an extinct house. A witness pearl may cloud when a certain name is spoken. Such signs are handled quietly, at first.

Public mutation is a scandal. Hidden mutation is politics.

The Reef Inquests exist to examine dangerous growth, unauthorized rites, and suspected Deluge-tainted relics. They are feared. They are also corruptible. A poor family may lose a child to examination. A great house may bury worse signs under legal privilege.

A Protagonist from the Coral Courts may have personal reason to question this system. They may be a Tide Magister who has seen court magic fail. A Pearl Envoy sent to hide a scandal. A Reef Duelist sworn to defend a house they no longer trust. They may carry a beautiful crest that is beginning to change.

Deepworks in the Coral Courts

Coral Court craft favors living systems. Their Reefwork grows gates, screens, memory chambers, garden defenses, and ceremonial spaces. Unlike Shellhold Pressurecraft, Coral Court Deepworks often appear natural and graceful. A gate may open like a flower. A legal archive may look like a garden. A defensive wall may bloom with stinging polyps when enemies approach.

Pearl lamp arrays light public districts. Coral memory walls preserve testimony, marriage lines, dueling outcomes, and civic law. Current channels guide movement through terraces. Noble estates may include private flow-courts where water pressure and direction can be adjusted for comfort, training, or defense.

Courtly Deepworks are elegant, but fragile when neglected. Living systems can be poisoned. Memory coral can be edited by experts. Pearl records can crack. A beautiful wall may hide a spreading Redbloom infection until it is almost too late.

The Shellhold Bastions often accuse the Courts of building systems that require too much trust. The Courts respond that Shellhold craft looks like fear given architecture.

Both are correct.

Relationships with Other Bloodtides

The Coral Courts treat the Kelpway Clans as necessary outsiders. Kelpway guides know routes that court maps cannot hold. Their healers understand growths that court physicians dismiss. Their scouts can find hidden paths through greenwater and reef margins. Still, court officials often try to tax, register, or bind them to fixed obligations. This creates constant tension. A Kelpway Current Guide may be honored in a court one day and accused of trespass the next.

The Shellhold Bastions are respected in war and patronized in peace. Court nobles admire Shellhold discipline when a gate must be held or a beast must be killed. They are less admiring when a Shellhold envoy speaks plainly in a chamber built for implication. Many Shellhold leaders consider the Courts decadent. Many Court nobles consider the Bastions crude. Their alliance has saved the Blue Realms more than once.

The Arkborn are both desired and distrusted. Coral scholars want old maps, sealed records, and relic interpretations. Court priests fear dry-world contamination. If an Arkborn vault contains proof that a noble house descends from Deluge criminals, that vault becomes a political weapon. Some Courts hire Arkborn Relic Scholars in secret, then publicly denounce old-world obsession.

The Abyssal Kin are the subject of deep prejudice. Gloam-Eyed envoys may be received politely and watched constantly. Blackfin hunters are treated as dangerous but useful. Darker abyssal cultures are used in court rhetoric to justify suspicion of all deep peoples. This creates moral tension for any Coral Court Protagonist who must travel below the Dim Roads and rely on those their society fears.

The Leviathan-Tide Peoples fascinate the Courts. Their ray-like forms, open-water grace, and moving histories seem wild and noble from a distance. Up close, they are hard to control. Coral rulers have tried to bind migration routes with treaties, marriages, debt, and sacred gifts. Sometimes this works for a generation. Then the routes change, and the Leviathan-Tide Peoples leave.

Religion and Belief

Coral Court religion is built around memory, vow, reef, and lineage. Their sacred spaces are living courts grown around ancestral coral, pearl reliquaries, or ancient reef stones believed to have survived the Deluge's first violence.

They honor the Reef Mothers and Crest Fathers, semi-legendary ancestors credited with shaping the first refuges. They venerate Pearl Saints, judges and martyrs whose final memories are said to remain clear inside sacred pearls. City spirits are treated as real presences. A city that has grown for centuries develops moods, preferences, and grudges.

The Deluge is usually taught as judgment. The dry empires reached beyond their place. They tried to bind sea, sky, moon, and blood. The waters rose because the world rejected them.

Not all Coral Court thinkers accept this. The Tide Magister Lethiri of the Third Terrace wrote that judgment is the story survivors tell when they do

not want to confess luck. Her writings were banned in Pearlspire for eighty years. They are now quoted in reformist courts and quietly studied by young nobles who suspect the official histories are too clean.

Court religion gives Protagonists strong dramatic material. A Reef Duelist may be sworn before an ancestor pearl. A Pearl Envoy may discover that a saint's preserved memory has been altered. A Tide Magister may learn that a city spirit is hiding guilt.

Archetypes of the Coral Courts

The three primary Coral Court Archetypes express the Bloodtide's core tensions: honor, diplomacy, and formal magic.

The Reef Duelist is the visible blade of court society. They fight in public disputes, defend house reputation, serve as bodyguards, and settle matters that law cannot untangle. A Reef Duelist is not merely a warrior. They understand etiquette, challenge forms, insult law, and the politics of restraint. Killing the wrong opponent may be worse than losing.

The Pearl Envoy is the court's most flexible instrument. They negotiate alliances, carry sealed messages, arrange hostage exchanges, investigate scandals, and spy under the cover of diplomacy. A Pearl Envoy may speak softly while deciding the fate of a city. Their danger lies in memory. They know who lied, who promised, and who cannot afford truth.

The Tide Magister is the court's heroic magic-user. Their authority comes from training, ritual, and visible command of water, pearl, and current. They may shield allies, redirect threats, expose hidden stains, or challenge hostile magic. Their greatest risk is pride. The Coral Courts teach that formal magic is safe because it is civilized. The Deluge proves that civilization is no guarantee of wisdom.

A Coral Court Protagonist may begin as a loyal servant of house and reef. They may become something more difficult: a witness to corruption, a reformer, an exile, or the only person willing to choose truth over beauty.

Adventure in the Coral Courts

Coral Court adventures should feel elegant on the surface and dangerous underneath. The first problem may be a duel, a missing pearl, an insult, a marriage dispute, or a legal question. The deeper problem is usually older.

A noble house may ask the Protagonist to recover a stolen witness pearl before it is opened. The pearl contains testimony that could prevent war, destroy a family, or prove that a revered ancestor caused a disaster. A Tide Magister may be found dead in a garden that insists no one entered. A living gate may refuse to open for its rightful heir. Redbloom may return in a district built over Avarin's sealed work. A Reef Duelist may win a lawful duel and discover that victory served the wrong side.

The Coral Courts are also a strong starting point for campaigns that later descend. The Protagonist may begin in Pearlspire, surrounded by light, law, and beauty. Then they follow a clue into the Dim Roads. They learn a court relic came from an Arkborn vault. They discover that a forbidden reef growth matches signs found near Ultharuun's Rift. They learn that the city's memory has been curated around a lie.

This Bloodtide works well for campaigns of intrigue, investigation, controlled magic, social danger, and moral compromise. It also gives the Director a strong contrast. When a Coral Court hero finally enters the Black Reaches, the loss of light should feel like the loss of language.

Coral Court Cultural Trait

Reef-Born Grace
A Coral Court character may claim +10 Advantage when using formal etiquette, courtly performance, ritualized negotiation, or elegant movement in a civilized reef setting. This benefit applies only when poise, presentation, or recognized status can meaningfully influence the scene.

The Director may deny this benefit in places where Coral Court status carries no authority or where elegance is actively harmful. A Shellhold emergency chamber, a Kelpway survival route, a hostile abyssal trench, or a collapsing ruin may not care how beautifully a Protagonist moves.

Names and Titles

Coral Court names often flow softly and carry house associations. Given names may include Ilvara, Soreth, Merathi, Vaelor, Lethiri, Avarin, Thessa, Oranth, Caelir, Yvessa, Maeril, Solivar, Rhyss, and Olaren.

House names often reference crest, color, reef, pearl, or ancient deeds. Examples include House Rosecrest, House Vaelor, House Merathi, House Oranth, House Bluewake, House Silverbranch, House Goldmantle, and House Shattered Crest.

Titles matter. A person may be addressed differently depending on chamber, rank, oath, and dispute. Common titles include Pearl Envoy, Crest-Heir, Reef-Judge, Duel-Witness, Tide Magister, House Blade, Memory-Keeper, and Oath-Voice.

A title used incorrectly may be forgiven once. After that, it becomes a choice.

Coral Court Story Seeds

A witness pearl opens during a public rite and speaks with the voice of someone who has been dead for five hundred years.

A noble crest begins growing in the pattern of House Shattered Crest, a line believed extinct after the Redbloom Scourge.

A Pearl Envoy vanishes while negotiating with a Shellhold Bastion. Both sides prepare for war.

A Tide Magister discovers that a court's living walls have been quietly editing legal memory.

A Reef Duelist is ordered to defend a guilty noble because the law is clear, even though justice is not.

A Coral Court marriage alliance requires a journey through the Rayroads, where the Leviathan-Tide Peoples have no patience for court schedules.

A sealed lower district of Pearlspire begins producing light again.

A Gloam-Eyed envoy arrives with proof that a beloved Coral Court saint once bargained with something in the Black Reaches.

A Redbloom outbreak appears in a house nursery, but only among children of one bloodline.

An Arkborn relic recovered from a drowned tower shows Pearlspire standing before the Deluge, though official history says the city grew afterward.

Coral Court Archetypes

Reef Duelist

A Reef Duelist is the polished blade of the Coral Courts.

In the reef cities, not every conflict becomes a war. Some become legal challenges. Some become honor disputes. Some become formal duels fought before pearl witnesses, house envoys, and living court walls that remember every word. The Reef Duelist stands in that dangerous space where law and violence meet.

A Reef Duelist may serve a noble house, a court magistrate, a temple of memory, or a powerful patron. Some are champions by inheritance. Others are elevated after talent, scandal, or a victory no one expected. A few are common-born fighters adopted into court service after saving a house heir or surviving an impossible challenge.

They are trained to move beautifully, but beauty is not the point. Every motion has purpose. A lowered blade may be mercy. A turned shoulder may be insult. A pause before the strike may allow an enemy to yield without public ruin.

Reef Duelists are useful in campaigns of intrigue, honor, political violence, and dangerous diplomacy. They can protect a Pearl Envoy, expose a false noble, defend a legal claim, or challenge someone too powerful to accuse in ordinary speech. Their greatest weakness is that court law can place them on the wrong side of justice. A Reef Duelist may be ordered to defend a guilty house because the forms are clear and the truth is not.

Many leave the Courts after such moments. Some become wandering champions. Some become assassins with manners. Some remain loyal and learn to bend the forms from within.

Starting Skills

- Blades
- Danger Sense
- Insight
- Oratory
- Persuasion
- Tactics

Starting Equipment

- **Reef saber** with a coral-bone grip and pearl balance bead
- **Court knife** worn openly for formal challenge
- **Light nacre-scale dueling harness**
- **House mantle** or formal challenge sash
- **Witness pearl token** proving the Duelist's right to issue or answer formal challenges
- **Shell-polish kit** for maintaining blade, crest ornaments, and court appearance
- **Duel cord** used to mark agreed boundaries before a formal fight

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Pearl Envoy

A Pearl Envoy is a messenger, negotiator, spy, hostage-broker, and keeper of dangerous words.

The Coral Courts run on speech. A promise made in the right chamber can bind a house for generations. A poor phrase can start a feud. A silence can be read as guilt. Pearl Envoys are trained to survive that world and carry its dangers into other waters.

A Pearl Envoy may be sent to Shellhold gates, Kelpway gatherings, Arkborn archives, Leviathan-Tide route markets, or even abyssal border settlements. They carry offers, warnings, apologies, threats, marriage terms, ransom

agreements, and sealed testimony. Sometimes they know what they carry. Sometimes they are trusted only with the outer shape of the message.

Good Envoys learn to listen before speaking. They know when to flatter a court, when to be blunt with a Shellborn, when to avoid written maps around Kelpway guides, and when to offer a Blackfin house something better than an apology.

This Archetype works well for a Protagonist who solves problems through diplomacy, secrets, social pressure, and careful timing. A Pearl Envoy may expose a forged treaty, prevent war, recover a stolen witness pearl, or learn that their own house sent them to be sacrificed.

The role is elegant, but not safe. Envoys are often sent where trust has already failed.

Starting Skills

- Bargain
- Deception
- Insight
- Oratory
- Persuasion
- Scholar

Starting Equipment

- **Pearl-sealed message case** with three inner compartments
- **Court travel mantle** with hidden pockets and house markings
- **Fine shell stylus and waterproof record leaves**
- **Small court blade** suitable for defense but not heavy combat
- **Gift-string** of polished shell, pearl chips, and coral beads for formal exchanges
- **Etiquette tablets** listing major titles, insults, and safe greetings
- **Witness bead** used to record a single sworn exchange

Tide Magister

A Tide Magister is the formal magic-user of the Coral Courts.

Their magic is taught in chambers of pearl, reef, and law. They learn the approved gestures. They memorize the safe limits. They study current forms, pressure boundaries, pearl memory, and the old disasters that define what must never be attempted again.

Tide Magisters are respected and feared. A noble house may employ one as advisor, ritualist, investigator, duelist, or living weapon. A city may call on them to strengthen reef wards, read a corrupted pearl, test a bloodline, or contain wild magic before it spreads.

They are not merely spellcasters. They are public figures. Their failures become scandals. Their successes become political tools. Their bodies may carry luminous signs of long practice. Their eyes may shine faintly after pearl workings. Their coral crests may be trimmed to show rank or school.

A Tide Magister Protagonist is ideal for campaigns involving magic, court intrigue, arcane mutation, formal duels, and old secrets hidden under beauty. They may begin loyal to the court system and slowly learn its limits. They may discover that formal magic is not as safe as their teachers claimed. Or they may become the one mage disciplined enough to stop others from repeating the old world's mistakes.

Starting Skills

- Arcane Lore
- Concentration
- Formal Magic
- Insight
- Investigation
- Scholar

Starting Equipment

- **Pearl focus circlet** or wrist-ring used in formal casting
- **Reef-script spell leaves** sealed in a shell tube
- **Ceremonial current wand** made from pale coral and silver shell
- **Nacre warding mantle** with light protective plates
- **Small pearl archive bead** containing approved formulae
- **Inkless court stylus** for writing on memory shell
- **Tide Magister's signet** marking school and court affiliation

Chapter Three: The Kelpway Clans

The Green Roads

The Kelpway Clans do not build for forever. They build to move.

Their homes drift, root, grow, and vanish. Their shelters are woven into kelp forests. Their camps hang beneath floating plant-mats. Their paths twist through greenwater shallows and old drowned ruins wrapped in living growth.

Outsiders call the Greenways wild. The Kelpway call them roads.

A bent frond can mean danger. A broken root can mark a safe turn. A patch of pale weed may warn of sickness in the water. A row of shell beads tied into kelp can tell a guide who passed, when they passed, and whether they were afraid.

The Kelpway are wanderers of the Sunlit Skin and the upper Blue Realms. Some clans never stop moving. Others return to the same seasonal grounds year after year. Their settlements are not weak because they move. That is what outsiders often fail to understand. A city can fall. A moving people can slip away and come back when the danger has starved.

This has made them hard to rule.

The Coral Courts have tried to tax the Greenways for centuries. They have never fully managed it. The Shellhold Bastions hire Kelpway guides more often than they admit. Arkborn scholars depend on Kelpway memory when old maps fail. Even the Abyssal Kin treat some Kelpway guides with care. Anyone who can survive the Dim Roads has learned something worth respecting.

The Kelpway are not one nation. They are many clans. Some are healers. Some are hunters. Some are smugglers. Some are quiet families who want only to move with the seasons and keep their children safe.

They remember favors. They remember insults. They remember who poisoned a route and who returned a body. Their law is not carved into stone. It is carried in knots, scars, marks, and stories.

It still binds.

Physical Form

Kelpway folk are greenwater-adapted aquatic humanoids. They are made for kelp forests, root tangles, reef margins, and murky shallows. Most are lean and flexible. They can fold through tight growth where larger Bloodtides struggle.

Their skin often comes in shades of olive, green, amber, blue-green, moss-black, reed-yellow, kelp-brown, gold-brown, or gray-green. Many have stripes or mottled patterns. These markings look like kelp shadow across the body. A skilled scout can vanish in a forest by going still.

Hair among the Kelpway often resembles plant growth. It may float like weed, fall in long fronds, or gather in soft rootlike strands. Some braid it with seed beads and bone charms. Others cut it short before dangerous travel.

Their eyes are usually wide and dark. Green, brown, amber, black, and deep gold are common. Pale eyes are rare. Some clans consider them a sign of strange sight or trouble with bright water.

Their hands and feet are webbed. The webbing is usually light. Many also have soft fin ridges along the arms, calves, hips, or back. These ridges help with sudden turns in dense growth.

Some Kelpway carry harmless living growths on their bodies. A healer may keep small medicinal nodules along the arm or shoulder. A scout may scrub away all visible growth to leave fewer traces. A young hunter may grow decorative fronds until their first major kill. Then the fronds are cut and given to the clan fire-beds.

The Kelpway are water-native. Some can endure short wet exposure above the waterline. A rain-washed ruin or humid sea cave may be survivable for a while. Dryness is dangerous. The Greenways are their home.

Clans, Routes, and Return

Kelpway life is built around clan, route, season, and return.

A clan is more than blood. It can include adopted children, rescued travelers, oath-kin, bonded healers, and outsiders who earned trust. Some clans are large enough to split into traveling bands. Others are small enough to vanish in one bad season.

Clan names often come from routes, plants, old wounds, or remembered acts. The Driftroot Clan traces its name to survivors who lived for a month on a floating root-mat after a Coral Court war. The Sevenfrond Clans claim seven founders who learned to follow current shifts by watching kelp lean. The Amber Veyr keep healing beds whose locations are never written down.

A route is not just a path. It is a relationship with living water. It includes currents, predators, shelter hollows, food beds, grave markers, and seasonal risks. A route may change from year to year. Only fools think a route can be owned by drawing it on a shell plate.

Children learn route memory young. They study knots, shell markers, seed pods, and frond cuts. They learn the taste of water near certain roots. They learn which silences mean safety and which mean hunting beasts.

A child may be asked to close their eyes and describe the next safe hollow by pressure alone. At first, failure is part of learning. Later, failure can kill a traveling band.

The great seasonal gatherings bring many clans together. Rootsong Drift is the most famous. Its old name remains, though the gathering now relies more on gesture, marked fronds, and recited route histories than formal song. There, disputes are settled. Children are adopted. Warnings are traded. Marriages are arranged. The dead are named before their markers are released into the green.

The Kelpway do not build monuments like the Coral Courts. Their memorials live. A grave may be a planted strand. A hero may be remembered by a bend in a route. A betrayal may be marked by a red shell tied where every guide can see it.

Outsiders miss these signs.

The Kelpway do not.

The First Bend and the Green Oath

Kelpway histories begin with Maerin Root-Hand.

The stories say Maerin led the first survivors through a forest that had grown over the roofs of drowned towers. Others begged her to settle in the ruins. Maerin refused. Stone remembered death too well. She tied living growth into shelters instead. She taught her people to follow what bent and survived.

Some Shellhold chroniclers doubt she existed. Arkborn records mention a woman called Maren-of-the-Root in early survivor accounts. Coral Court scholars claim Maerin was probably a minor exile whose story grew larger over time.

The Kelpway do not care. The lesson matters more than the bones.

Another old story tells of the Green Oath. It began after the Burning Drift, when a Coral Court commander tried to cut a military channel through a sacred kelp route. His workers used blades and caustic brine. They killed fish beds, medicine growths, and burial strands.

Then the current turned.

The commander's force became trapped in poisoned water. Kelpway healers saved many of them. Afterward, the clans demanded an oath. No court force would cut a living route without clan consent.

The Coral Courts honored the oath for ninety years.

Then they broke it.

The second violation led to the Thornwake Feud. Every clan still remembers it. Some will not guide Coral Court travelers unless they first place their hands in bitterroot sap and swear not to harm the Greenways.

Court nobles often find this humiliating.

Kelpway elders consider it generous.

Society of Movement

Kelpway leadership is practical.

One person may lead during travel. Another may lead during sickness. A third may lead in a fight. A Current Guide rules the route. A Green-Tide Healer rules the sickbed. A Kelpstalker speaks when predators are near.

Age matters, but age alone does not command obedience. An elder who no longer reads changing water may be honored but not followed. A young guide who finds safe passage through poisoned growth may gain authority before their first adult scars fade.

Kelpway wealth is light. Heavy wealth is a burden. Good tools matter more than bright treasure. A

strong knife, a seed pouch, a medicine roll, a shelter weave, or a living cord can save lives. A chest of pearls cannot help if it slows the band.

Gifts should be useful. A Coral Court ornament with no purpose may be taken as an insult. If it carries history or honest affection, that is different. The Kelpway are not crude. They simply dislike weight without meaning.

Disputes are handled through restitution, service, exile, or route denial. Route denial is severe. It means a clan, guide, or settlement will not shelter the offender in certain waters. In easy country this is shame. In harsh water it is a death sentence spoken politely.

The Kelpway are not always peaceful. A healer's people can still carry knives. A Kelpstalker can wait in green shadow for hours. Hunters use barbed darts, living snares, venom paste, and current traps. A clan that knows every root and hollow does not need walls to defend its home.

Greenwater Craft

Kelpway craft is light and living.

They do not favor heavy Deepworks. A device that must stay fixed to function is not trusted. A good tool should be portable, repairable, hideable, or easy to abandon. If it fails, it should not doom a whole settlement.

Their craft includes living cord, root shelters, kelp skiffs, seed lamps, medicinal beds, and woven current fins. These things are not effortless wonders. A living tool must be fed, trimmed, cleaned, and watched. A neglected skiff grows sluggish. A seed lamp dims in bad water. A healing bed can become infected.

Kelp skiffs are among their most useful vehicles. They are small flexible craft grown from buoyant root, ribbed kelp, shell braces, and treated hide. A skiff cannot go anywhere safely. It needs a known route and a skilled handler. In the hands of a Current Guide, it can slip through green corridors no Shellhold barge could enter.

Some clans use drift-sleds for trade. Others use root rafts that can be disguised as harmless growth. Messenger pods carry sealed warnings between gatherings. These pods follow current and buoyancy. Many are lost. Finding one from a dead clan is an ill omen.

Shellhold folk often call Kelpway craft fragile. The Kelpway reply that Shellhold machines sink loudly and need too many hands.

Both statements have truth in them.

Magic, Medicine, and Caution

The Kelpway live close to growing things. This has made them gifted healers. It has also made them careful.

Green-Tide Healers are respected across the Drowned Realms. A skilled healer can draw venom, slow Redbloom, calm pressure fever, treat brine sickness, and read the early signs of arcane mutation. Some can coax remedies from cultivated nodules or old medicine beds.

Their craft is not always gentle. Kelpway medicine can sting. It can burn. It can bind a patient in living fiber until the fever breaks. Some cures bring visions.

The clans make a hard distinction between healing growth and hungry growth. Healing growth works with the body. Hungry growth wants to replace it.

This is why many elders distrust formal magic. They know what happens when power grows beyond its keeper. A Tide Magister may speak of perfect control. A Kelpway healer has seen perfect control rot from the root.

The Kelpway have their own rites. They are usually small. A guide ties a route knot. A healer wakes a bitter medicine. A hunter marks a dangerous den. A family plants a grave-frond and returns each season until it no longer needs tending.

They are wary of grand workings. Grand workings drowned the old world. Or so many clans believe.

Not everyone agrees. Some young healers want stronger rites to fight mutation. Some Kelpstalkers use toxins taken from arcane beasts. Some Current Guides search old ruins for lost route magic. A few clans have vanished after trusting growths that promised protection.

The empty routes remain.

Arcane Mutation in the Greenways

Mutation in the Greenways often starts beautifully.

A red frond appears in a green bed. A seed lamp glows brighter than it should. A root bridge heals itself overnight. A child's skin takes on a new pattern. A medicine nodule cures one sickness and then begins to grow teeth.

The Greenways are vulnerable because they are alive. Arcane contamination spreads through root, spore, seed, parasite, and current. A broken relic under a kelp forest can poison a route for generations. A dead beast can become a nursery for something worse.

Common dangers include Redbloom, soft coral rot, glass-vein growth, brine fever, false seed pods, whispering algae, and root hunger. The Kelpway have names for each stage. They also have burn rites, cutting laws, quarantine knots, and mercy rules.

Mercy is hard among the clans.

A person can sometimes survive early mutation. A route cannot always wait. If a guide carries a spreading growth, the clan must choose quickly. Some healers fight until hope is gone. Some hunters act sooner.

Stories are told of Nessa Bitterfrond. She saved thirty children during the Pale Spore Year by cutting infected growth from her own body and using it to brew a cure.

Stories are also told of Harl Vey. He hid a luminous infection because it gave him visions of safe routes. Three clans died following him into a forest that had already changed.

The Kelpway do not treat mutation as simple evil.

They treat it as hunger without wisdom.

Relationships with Other Bloodtides

The Coral Courts are the Kelpway's oldest frustration. Reef cities need Kelpway routes, medicines, scouts, and warnings. They also try to regulate them. Court officials issue permits for waters they do not understand. Noble houses sponsor expeditions through sacred growth and then act surprised when guides refuse them.

Still, the relationship is not only hostile. Many Coral Court houses keep old guide pacts. Pearl Envoys rely on Kelpway escorts. Tide Magisters sometimes seek Green-Tide Healers when court magic worsens a living infection. Rare marriages

between the Courts and the Clans carry great weight. They also bring trouble.

The Shellhold Bastions are easier to deal with. They pay for guides, herbs, route reports, and safe passage. They grumble about wandering ways, but they respect results. In return, the Bastions offer tools, shelter, guards, and safe chambers during bad seasons.

The tension comes from permanence. Shellholds want fixed routes and clear schedules. Kelpway guides answer that living water does not keep appointments.

The Arkborn are difficult guests. They ask too many questions near old ruins. They trust dead maps too long. They sometimes carry sealed relics without knowing how living things will react to them. Even so, Arkborn records can be useful. An old vault map may explain why a route sickens or why animals avoid a forest.

The Abyssal Kin are treated with care. Gloam-Eyed travelers and Blackfin hunters often trade warnings with Kelpway guides along the Dim Roads. The Kelpway know that not all deep peoples are the same. They also know that some signs should end a journey at once.

The Leviathan-Tide Peoples are close in spirit. Both value movement. Both distrust ownership claims over living routes. Both carry memory through travel. Yet conflict still happens. A leviathan route can crush a kelp forest. A medicine bed can grow in waters needed by migrating beasts. Respect can turn such conflicts into old agreements. Arrogance turns them into feuds.

Religion and Belief

Kelpway belief is rooted in growth, return, and attention.

They do not deny gods or spirits. They simply distrust powers that demand stillness and obedience. Their sacred places are living groves, hidden springs, old root arches, safe hollows, and grave growths. A place becomes holy because people survived there, healed there, returned there, or died to protect it.

They honor Maerin Root-Hand. They honor the healers of the Pale Spore Year. They honor route-keepers who turned back from profit to warn strangers. They honor the first clans who chose motion over walls.

Their rites are small and close. A healer presses a seed into a wound before sealing it. A guide ties a route knot before entering unknown water. A hunter leaves flesh near a predator's den after a clean kill. A family plants a grave-frond in secret and tends it until the green takes over.

The Kelpway view the Deluge as both disaster and lesson. The old world broke because it tried to force permanence. It built too high. It claimed too much. It trusted power that could not bend.

The sea rose. The Kelpway survived by yielding without surrendering.

This belief gives them strength. It can also make them evasive. A Coral Court judge may call them unreliable. A Shellhold commander may call them impossible to pin down. The Kelpway answer that a fixed oath can become a trap when the water changes.

Archetypes of the Kelpway Clans

The three Kelpway Archetypes express the clan virtues of movement, patience, and care.

The Current Guide is more than a navigator. They read water like others read script. They know

pressure shifts, plant lean, predator absence, silt taste, and light angle. A Current Guide can lead an expedition through waters where maps are useless. When they choose wrong, others die.

The Kelpstalker is a hunter and scout. They fight from concealment. They use terrain as a weapon. They know how to wait. They also know when not to strike. A Kelpstalker may be a protector, assassin, beast-hunter, or path-clearer.

The Green-Tide Healer carries one of the heaviest roles in the clans. They treat wounds, venom, sickness, parasites, mutation signs, and grief. They know remedies other Bloodtides would pay fortunes to own. They also make decisions no one else wants to make. When a growth cannot be cured, the healer must say so.

A Kelpway Protagonist may begin as an expert of one route. The wider world will not leave them there for long. Their skills are useful everywhere. Their challenge is deciding who deserves guidance, who deserves healing, and which paths should stay hidden.

Adventure in the Greenways

Kelpway adventures begin with movement.

A route closes. A guide vanishes. A forest grows in the wrong season. A medicine bed becomes poisonous. A predator attacks from a direction it should not know. A Shellhold convoy ignores a warning and disappears. A Coral Court house claims ownership of a sacred greenwater path. An Arkborn relic wakes under a root-mat.

The Greenways are beautiful, but not safe. Light falls through green columns. Small fish scatter in silver bursts. Old towers lean beneath plant growth. Red infection blooms in a hidden hollow. Something large moves where the forest should be still.

A Kelpway Protagonist may be asked to guide outsiders through a route their clan wants hidden. They may have to choose between saving a settlement and preserving a sacred grove. They may hunt a beast and discover it is fleeing deeper corruption. They may find that a route marker was moved by someone who wanted travelers to die.

Kelpway stories often lead toward larger danger. Living routes notice changes before cities do. A spreading mutation may first appear as sickened kelp. A pressure shift may bend plants days before a gate fails. A leviathan changing course may tear open a forest and expose ruins sealed since the Deluge.

The Kelpway are rarely the loudest people in the Drowned Realms.

They are often the first to know something is wrong.

Kelpway Cultural Trait

Greenway Instinct

A Kelpway character may claim +10 Advantage when navigating kelp forests, identifying useful marine growth, hiding among vegetation, or following living routes. This benefit does not apply in barren ruins, open blackwater, or sterile old-world structures unless plant life is present.

The Director may also allow this Trait when the character studies changes in living terrain, identifies early signs of ecological mutation, or uses plant cover to gain position in a scene.

Names and Clan Marks

Kelpway names tend to be short, fluid, and tied to clan memory. Given names may include Maerin, Nessa, Harl, Vey, Sava, Roothe, Kel, Arven, Ilyth, Toma, Bren, Lura, Eshan, Orra, and Vessa.

Clan names often reference plants, routes, wounds, colors, or remembered events. Examples include Driftroot, Sevenfrond, Amber Veyr, Bitterfrond, Greenwake, Softcoil, Rootmantle, Thornwake, Pale Spore, and Deepreed.

Kelpway marks are usually portable or living. A guide may carry a knot-cord marking safe routes. A healer may wear seed beads showing their training line. A hunter may mark their arm with temporary dye before entering a dangerous forest.

Permanent scars are used sparingly.

A scar should mean something worth carrying.

Kelpway Story Seeds

A sacred route begins leading travelers in circles, though every marker is correct.

A Green-Tide Healer finds a cure for Redbloom that slowly changes the patient's dreams.

A Coral Court noble claims legal ownership of a kelp forest after finding an old pearl record beneath it.

A Shellhold caravan disappears after refusing to abandon heavy cargo in a living route.

A Kelpstalker finds a predator dead from wounds made by a weapon no Bloodtide uses.

An Arkborn relic beneath a root-mat begins warming the water and speeding plant growth.

A young Current Guide returns from the Dim Roads with blackened route knots and no memory of tying them.

A Leviathan-Tide migration will crush a seasonal gathering unless someone learns why the route changed.

A clan elder orders a living grove burned before anyone else sees what has grown there.

A Kelpway Protagonist is asked to guide an Ultharic defector through the Greenways while three Bloodtides hunt them.

Kelpway Clan Archetypes

Current Guide

A Current Guide knows that water is never empty.

It leans. It pulls. It remembers motion. It warns those who know how to listen. In the Greenways, a route is not a line on a map. It is a living agreement between current, growth, shelter, predator, and season. Current Guides are trained to read those agreements.

A Current Guide leads travelers through kelp forests, reef margins, root tunnels, open shallows, and dangerous shifting paths. They know when a route is sick. They know when fish have fled too quietly. They know when a safe hollow has become a trap. Their work may look like instinct to outsiders, but it is learned through years of watching water.

Some Guides serve one clan. Others travel widely. A few hire themselves to Shellhold caravans, Coral Court envoys, Arkborn expeditions, or Leviathan-Tide crossings. Their worth is high because a good Guide can save a party from dangers no weapon can fight.

This Archetype suits exploration, travel, escort missions, route mysteries, and survival campaigns. A Current Guide may be asked to lead outsiders through a path their clan wants hidden. They may find that a living route has changed because something beneath it has awakened. They may discover that a map, treaty, or old claim means nothing in water that has already moved on.

Starting Skills

- Currentcraft
- Danger Sense
- Depth Lore
- Forage
- Survival
- Tracking

Starting Equipment

- **Kelpweave travel harness** with quick-release ties
- **Route-knot cord** marking known safe paths
- **Bone current needle** used to test flow direction
- **Seed-lamp cluster** for dim greenwater travel
- **Short shell knife**
- **Folded root shelter sheet**
- **Waterproof pouch of route tokens, bitterroot paste, and emergency food strips**

Kelpstalker

A Kelpstalker is the shadow in the green.

They are hunters, scouts, ambushers, and guardians of clan routes. They learn to wait until the water forgets them. They know which fronds hide a body, which silt patches betray movement, and which predators should be avoided instead of challenged.

Kelpstalkers protect medicine beds, hidden camps, seasonal gatherings, and sacred routes. They also track beasts, kill dangerous raiders, silence spies, and punish those who poison living paths. Some are honorable wardens. Some are feared assassins. Most are both, depending on who tells the story.

A Kelpstalker does not fight like a Shellguard or Reef Duelist. They do not want a formal challenge. They want position. They want cover. They want the target to enter the wrong hollow at the wrong time. Their weapons are short, quiet, and practical. Their traps use root, barb, venom, silt, and current.

This Archetype works well for stealth, tracking, ambush, wilderness danger, and moral tension. A Kelpstalker may hunt a beast that turns out to be fleeing corruption. They may be ordered to kill a trespasser who is carrying a vital warning. They may discover that their own clan moved a route marker to send strangers to their deaths.

Starting Skills

- Blades
- Currentcraft
- Stealth
- Survival
- Tracking
- Trapmaking

Starting Equipment

- **Barbed kelp-dart launcher** or short water-bow equivalent
- **Curved shell knife**
- **Camouflage kelpweave cloak**

- **Pouch of nonlethal sleep paste or irritant venom**
- **Living snare cord**
- **Soft-soled grip wraps for quiet movement through growth**
- **Small marker shells used to warn clan allies or mislead enemies**

Green-Tide Healer

A Green-Tide Healer carries mercy that can cut.

The Kelpway Clans are famous for healers who understand living growth, venom, parasites, pressure fever, Redbloom, and the early signs of arcane mutation. Their remedies may come from kelp beds, bitter roots, medicinal nodules, fungal cups, treated brine, and Wild Magic. Their work saves lives that court physicians or Shellhold surgeons might lose.

But healing in the Greenways is not gentle by nature. A cure may burn. A parasite may need to be cut out while it still moves. A spreading growth may be slowed by binding living fiber around the wound. A healer may have to decide whether a patient can be saved or whether the route must be protected.

Green-Tide Healers often travel because need travels. They may serve a clan, wander between routes, accompany expeditions, or be called into foreign settlements during outbreaks. Coral Court nobles seek them quietly. Shellhold guards respect them if they prove steady. Arkborn scholars ask too many questions about their living medicines.

This Archetype is ideal for campaigns involving disease, mutation, mercy, ecological danger, and difficult choices. A Green-Tide Healer may cure a spreading corruption at personal cost. They may learn that a medicine bed is growing from an old-world relic. They may be hunted because they know how to save someone a faction wants dead.

Starting Skills

- Herbalism
- Medicine
- Wild Magic
- Forage
- Insight
- Survival

Starting Equipment

- **Living medicine roll** with sealed pouches for roots, salves, and nodules
- **Bone lancets and shell scalpels**
- **Greenwater healer's wrap** marked with clan beads
- **Seed-lamp cup** for examining wounds
- **Bitterroot paste, venom binder, and coral rash wash**
- **Soft kelp restraint cord** for fevered or mutating patients
- **Small charm of Maerin Root-Hand or local healing ancestor**

Chapter Four: The Shellhold Bastions

The Walls That Hold

The Shellhold Bastions were built where weaker walls failed.

Their elders say this often. It is not only pride. It is warning. The sea is beautiful, but beauty does not hold a gate closed. Law does not seal a crack. A clever speech does not stop pressure from splitting stone.

When the wall groans, someone must know where to brace it.

The Shellhold Bastions stand across the Blue Realms and the Dim Roads. Their settlements guard pressure shelves, trade routes, descent roads, vent approaches, and old ruin frontiers. They are made from shellstone, dense coral cement, bone beams, volcanic glass, salvaged ruin-metal, and whatever else the sea has failed to break.

Their people are the Shellborn.

Most Shellborn are larger than other Bloodtide folk. They are broad, thick-bodied, and heavily muscled. Outsiders often compare them to sea turtles. The comparison is close enough to be useful and wrong enough to annoy them. Shellborn do not have shells on their backs. Their strength is in the body itself. Dense bone. Heavy muscle. Tough skin. Hard ridges along the head and face.

A Shellborn guard in a gate hall can look like part of the wall. A Shellborn mason at work can look like stone given breath.

The Bastions are not rich in the Coral Court manner. They are not lush like the Greenways. They do not carry the old-world mystery of the Arkborn. They do not move with the vast grace of the Leviathan-Tide Peoples.

Their greatness is plainer.

They endure.

They hold gates. They repair seals. They guard trade. They build where the current punishes mistakes. They send escorts into routes other

Bloodtides avoid. They bury their honored dead in walls, foundations, and gate chambers, so the living pass through places held by old oaths.

A Shellhold proverb says, “A wall is not stone. A wall is promise.”

Most outsiders hear only the stone.

Physical Form

The Shellborn have two recognized forms.

The first is the common form. These are the Shellborn most people picture when they hear the name. They are large aquatic humanoids with great strength and heavy bodies. They are usually taller and broader than most Bloodtide folk. Their forms are built for endurance, hauling, bracing, guarding, and hard labor under pressure.

They do not carry back shells. Their protection comes from dense muscle, tough skin, reinforced bone, and hard ridges.

Common traits among full Shellborn include:

- skin in mostly uniform tones of slate-gray, blue-gray, iron-blue, dark green, ochre, sand-brown, stone-brown, rust-brown, charcoal, or dull ivory;
- thick necks and powerful shoulders;
- heavy arms and broad hands;
- partial webbing between the fingers;
- hard ridges along the brow, jaw, cheekbones, skull, forearms, or spine;
- blunt facial features;
- dense torsos and heavy limbs;
- dark eyes in black, brown, gray, deep green, copper, or muted gold;
- rougher skin with age;
- old scars sealed with resin, shell cement, or metal braces.

The second form is less common. These Shellborn descend from mixed Bloodtide unions. Most are born from Shellborn and Coral Court bloodlines, but not all. Other pairings happen, especially near trade routes, shared fortresses, and long-standing alliances.

In common speech, they are often called **Shellkin**. Formal Shellhold records may call them **Crosscurrent Shellborn**. This is especially common in inheritance disputes, craft house records, and legal agreements with other Bloodtides.

Shellkin are closer in size to most Bloodtide peoples. They are more humanoid in outline. They move with more flexibility than full Shellborn. Many carry visible traits from both parents.

A Shellkin with Coral Court descent may have smoother features, pearl-toned eyes, faint coral flecks, or brighter skin beneath Shellborn ridges. One with Kelpway ancestry may be leaner and greener. One with Arkborn ancestry may show fine scales, seal-mark birth patterns, or unusual lung structure.

Common Shellkin traits include:

- medium to tall humanoid build;
- smaller size than full Shellborn;
- skin in gray-blue, pearl-gray, green-gray, pale ochre, coral-gray, bronze-gray, muted teal, or mixed tones;
- lighter ridges along the face, shoulders, or arms;

- stronger hands and denser bones than most non-Shellborn;
- visible signs from another Bloodtide;
- more flexible movement;
- eyes that often reveal mixed ancestry.

Shellkin occupy a complex place in Bastion life. Some are treated as bridges between peoples. Some are treated as proof that Shellborn duty can travel beyond blood. Others face suspicion from old craft houses.

Shellhold law says service defines worth.

Shellhold bloodlines do not always obey the law.

Life Inside a Hold

A Shellhold is not only a fortress. It is a living system.

Walls matter. Gates matter. Pumps matter. Food beds matter. Work halls matter. Every brace and seal is part of survival.

The outer shell takes the sea's first violence. It may be built from shellstone, old ruinwork, hardened coral cement, thick bone beams, or salvage plates. Defensive spines and rough barriers protect the approach. Narrow corridors force enemies into controlled spaces. Heavy gates divide districts, so one failure does not doom the whole hold.

Inside, every area has a purpose. Work halls sit near tool stores. Mason chambers face gate systems. Guard barracks watch pressure routes. Healers stay near emergency chambers. Children learn safe paths before they learn history.

Karth Shellhold is the most famous Bastion. It guards a major route between the Blue Realms and the Dim Roads. Its lower gates are said to have survived three pressure ruptures, two leviathan panics, and the Long Silt War.

Karth is not beautiful by Coral Court standards. Its walls are thick. Its passages are clear. Its gatehouses are severe. Its people consider this praise.

Older holds are often built around pre-Deluge structures. Some began as old refuges, military tunnels, or dry-world foundations. Others were carved into sea cliffs or grown around natural shell reefs. The oldest Bastions keep foundation chambers where no outsider is allowed. These chambers hold ancestor niches, first tools, broken gate cores, and records of every great failure the hold survived.

Shellhold architecture remembers disaster on purpose.

A cracked gate plate may be preserved for apprentices. A warped brace may hang in a work hall. A scar in the wall may be left visible for generations.

The Coral Courts hide flaws.

The Shellholds teach from them.

Duty and Rank

Shellhold society is built around duty.

Family matters. Blood matters. Craft matters more.

A Shellborn child learns early that no one survives alone. A guard depends on a mason. A mason depends on a hauler. A hauler depends on the filter keeper. The filter keeper depends on the scout who warned the hold about poisoned water.

The most important person in the room is not always the oldest or highest born. It may be the person who knows how to keep everyone alive.

This does not make Shellhold society equal. It has ranks, craft houses, guard orders, work crews, gate families, and old lineages. Age is respected. Proven service is honored. Failure in public duty is remembered.

But status must be renewed through usefulness. A title without labor is decorative waste.

The major social units are holds, craft houses, oath crews, and gate lines. A hold is the settlement and its sworn people. A craft house trains those who share a trade. An oath crew forms around dangerous work or long service. A gate line maintains a specific gate, lock, pump, or descent chamber across generations.

Pressure Masons hold special authority. They are not rulers. But no wise ruler ignores them. A senior mason can declare a district unsafe. They can order an evacuation. They can halt trade through a gate.

This authority was earned through death.

During the Collapse of Third Karth, Commander Rovan Shell-Red ordered a lower gate held open to save a cargo convoy. Senior Mason Dema Urr warned him that the gateframe had shifted. Rovan overruled her.

The gate failed.

The lower district imploded. Two hundred died, along with the convoy they tried to save. Dema lived long enough to seal the upper chamber by hand. Her last act saved the rest of the hold.

Since then, the Karth Accords have granted emergency authority to sealwrights and Pressure Masons across many Bastions. Some commanders resent this. Most obey.

The wall remembers Rovan.

It honors Dema.

The Shellborn View of Magic

The Shellholds do not hate all magic. The Drowned Realms are too old for simple answers. But the Shellborn distrust power that cannot be tested, repaired, repeated, or contained.

Their reason is plain. The Deluge was arcane. Whatever wonders the old world held, those wonders drowned it. That is enough for many Shellborn.

The lesson is blunt.

Power without maintenance becomes ruin.

The Bastions use certain rites and workings. They use warded seals, pressure marks, reef-cement formulae, old lock invocations, and Deepworks traditions. Some of these blur the line between craft and magic. A mason may speak to a gate before opening it. A builder may set bone charms into a foundation. A healer may use brine prayers during pressure trauma.

The difference is control.

Shellhold magic must have procedure. It must have inspection. It must have a failure plan.

A Tide Magister may shape water into a perfect spiral. A Shellhold mason asks what happens if the caster falls unconscious. An Arkborn relic may open a sealed chamber. A Shellhold guard asks who closes it if the relic breaks. A Kelpway remedy may heal a wound overnight. A Shellhold healer asks what else the growth is feeding on.

This attitude makes the Bastions stubborn. It also makes them hard to fool.

Many disasters have been contained because a worker noticed the wrong vibration in a wall, a sweating seam, a pressure wobble, or a seal that looked too clean.

The Bastions do produce magic-users. They rarely celebrate them the way the Coral Courts do. A Shellborn with magical talent is often trained toward practical work. Wards. Seals. Purification. Hazard control. Defensive rites.

Those who seek spectacle often leave.

Some return as warnings.

Pressurecraft and Deepworks

If the Shellholds have an art, it is Pressurecraft.

Pressurecraft is the discipline of building and repairing under hostile water. It includes gates, seals, braces, filters, current locks, pressure chambers, emergency closures, and ruin supports. It is craft. It is mathematics. It is habit. It is fear made useful.

A Pressure Mason must understand material and force. Shellstone bends in one way. Vent-metal bends in another. Coral cement holds well in some waters and poorly in others. Bone beams can flex where rigid stone shatters. Salvaged old-world plates may last for centuries, then fail along hidden seams.

A mason's tools are practical and personal. Seal hammers. Brace hooks. Resin needles. Pressure shells. Vent keys. Chalkstone markers. Hinge clamps. Coral cement knives. Weighted cord.

A master's tool roll may be inherited for generations. Losing it is shameful. Breaking it to save lives is honorable.

Shellhold Deepworks are heavy and reliable. Pressure gates are the most important. They control movement between depth zones. They protect districts from sudden changes. They keep a failure in one chamber from killing the whole hold.

Brine pumps clean the water. Current wheels move controlled flow through channels. Vent engines power forges, lifts, and emergency closures. Sealed descent carriers allow short travel through hostile pressure. Cargo sleds, shell barges, current-haulers, armored skiffs, and wall-crawling repair rigs move people and supplies.

None of these are easy wonders. They need crews. They need routes. They need maintenance. A Shellhold vehicle is less a symbol of freedom than an argument with the sea.

That argument must be renewed every day.

The Pressure Mason is the archetype that best carries this tradition. A Protagonist on this path can anchor a whole campaign. They may repair a failing gate. Inspect a corrupted pump. Open a sealed ruin safely. Brace a tunnel during combat. Decide which district must be sacrificed to save the rest.

No other archetype in Undine should feel more grounded in Craft.

The Pressure Mason is the person everyone prays for when the wall cracks.

Food, Labor, and Daily Life

Shellhold life is hard, but not joyless.

Food comes from armored fish pens, fungus chambers, shellfish beds, reef farms, traded kelp, and hardy growths raised in protected water. Meals are dense and salty. Feast days bring spice, bright fish, fermented kelp, carved fruiting growths, and rare Coral Court luxuries.

A Shellhold feast is loud. It is crowded. It includes the dead. Toasts are made to those who built, held, repaired, guarded, and died.

Children train early. They learn safe chambers, pressure signals, brace points, and evacuation routes. Their games often mimic repairs, route drills, and strength contests. A young Shellborn may be asked to sit against a wall and describe its vibration.

Craft pride shapes daily life. A good hinge is praised. A clean seal is admired. A badly kept tool is a moral failure. Work crews use hand signs, tool taps, and short calls to keep rhythm during repair.

Precision matters more than display.

Marriage customs vary by hold. Some unions are arranged between craft houses. Others form through oath service. Cross-Bloodtide marriages are most common near Coral Court borders, major trade routes, and Arkborn settlements. These unions produce many Shellkin.

A conservative hold may question a Shellkin child's inheritance. A practical hold asks what the child can do when grown.

The dead are placed in foundation niches, wall chambers, or guarded silt fields. A person who dies saving a structure may have their name carved near the repaired site. A failed worker may still be buried with respect. The record of failure remains.

The Bastions do not erase mistakes from love. They keep them so the living learn.

The Shellkin Question

Shellkin complicate Shellhold identity.

In law, most Bastions recognize them as Shellborn if they are raised under Shellhold oath or acknowledged by a Shellborn parent. In daily life, acceptance varies.

A Shellkin with Coral Court features may be praised as graceful in one hold and mocked as soft in another. A Shellkin with Arkborn markings may be valued as clever or watched as dangerous. A Shellkin with Kelpway traits may be admired as a scout and suspected of restlessness.

The formal term Crosscurrent Shellborn appears in legal documents and genealogy records. It sounds dignified. It can also sound distant. The common word Shellkin is warmer in some places and dismissive in others.

Shellkin often become bridges between Bloodtides. They serve as negotiators, scouts, envoys, Domewright apprentices, current messengers, and craft specialists. Some become Shellguards to prove loyalty. Others become Pressure Masons and let the wall decide their worth.

There have been famous Shellkin in Bastion history.

Tavros Bluecrest was born of a Shellborn mother and a Coral Court father. In youth, he was mocked for his bright ridges and courtly speech. Later, he negotiated the Reef-Gate Compact. Three Bastions survived because his treaty kept Coral Court supplies moving during a pressure famine.

Mera Voss carried Arkborn ancestry. She became a Pressure Mason and redesigned the lower braces

of Karth Shellhold. Her enemies called her vault-blooded. When the next tremor came, her work held.

Shellkin stories are often stories of proof. This can be inspiring. It can also be unfair. A full Shellborn may belong by birth. A Shellkin may be asked to prove belonging again and again.

A Shellkin Protagonist has strong dramatic ground. They may love the Bastions and resent them at the same time. They may move between Bloodtides more easily than most. They may also see weaknesses in Shellhold tradition that others refuse to name.

War and Defense

Shellhold warfare is defensive by instinct.

They prefer choke points, hard cover, layered gates, reinforced corridors, prepared fallbacks, and controlled approaches. They do not chase glory in open water if a wall can make the enemy come to them.

This does not make them passive.

A Shellhold strike crew is terrifying when used well. Shellguards advance behind heavy shields and shell-plate armor. Ruin-Breakers open collapsed routes, mark hazards, and turn bad terrain against enemies. Pressure Masons seal chambers, breach walls at calculated points, and brace corridors long enough for civilians to escape.

Shellhold weapons are practical. Heavy spears, hooks, axes, tridents, weighted nets, barbed lines, gate hammers, and short brutal blades are common. Armor is built from shell plates, reinforced hide, bone, salvage metal, and coral cement.

A full Shellborn warrior in heavy gear is slow in open water. In a narrow gate passage, they are almost impossible to move.

The Bastions have fought many wars. The Long Silt War lasted nearly thirty years. The Gatewinter Crisis sealed three holds from one another after pressure sickness spread through trade locks. The Reef-Gate Compact ended a bitter conflict with the Coral Courts over tolls and descent rights. The Karth Accords reshaped emergency authority after the collapse of Third Karth.

Their darkest conflicts face the Black Reaches. Some Bastions maintain old watch gates along abyssal routes. These gates are rarely opened. Guards stationed there are paid well, rotated often, and watched for signs of pressure dreams, ink marks, or sudden religious obsession.

Some doors are walls with hinges.

Shellhold elders say this often.

They mean it.

Relationships with Other Bloodtides

The Coral Courts are the Shellholds' closest rivals and most necessary partners. Court cities need Shellhold gates, guards, engineers, and trade security. Shellholds need court wealth, supplies, political access, and refined Reefwork.

They insult each other constantly. They also trade, marry, negotiate, and bleed together.

Shellborn often view Coral Court elegance with suspicion. Court law feels slippery. Court magic feels proud. Court promises sound too polished. Yet many Shellborn respect individual Reef Duelists and Tide Magisters who prove steady under pressure. Shellkin families deepen the

connection between the two Bloodtides, even when both sides pretend not to need it.

The Kelpway Clans are valued as guides and healers. Shellhold caravans rely on them in living terrain. In return, the Bastions offer tools, shelter, guards, and safe chambers. The friction is familiar. Shellholds want fixed routes. Kelpway guides answer that living water does not obey schedules.

The Arkborn are respected and feared. A good Domewright can save a Bastion built over an old sealed system. A careless Relic Scholar can wake something better left alone. Many holds require Arkborn visitors to declare relics before entering major gates. Arkborn scholars resent this. Shellhold guards remember too many accidents to care.

The Abyssal Kin are judged by region and reputation. Gloam-Eyed guides may be welcomed at certain deep gates. Blackfin hunters may be hired to track threats in cold current channels. Darker abyssal cultures are treated as grave dangers. The Ultharic Spawn are hated in most Bastions. Stories of sacrificed gate crews and ink-marked locks remain common along the lower watch.

The Leviathan-Tide Peoples are admired and distrusted. Shellholds build anchors, harness plates, and route markers for them. They also complain that no moving people can understand the weight of defending one place for centuries. Leviathan-Tide visitors answer that no fixed people can understand the courage it takes to leave.

Both are partly right.

Religion and Belief

Shellhold belief is rooted in endurance, craft, and obligation.

They honor foundation ancestors, gate martyrs, sealwrights, holdfast saints, and the dead who remained at their posts. Their shrines are built into walls, tool halls, gateframes, and foundation chambers. Offerings are practical. Polished tools. Repair resin. Carved shell. Pressure-stone. A name added to a work ledger.

Prayer is usually brief.

Before a repair, a mason may touch the wall and name the one who taught them. Before battle, a Shellguard may press their brow ridge to a shield. Before opening a dangerous gate, a crew may recite the names of those lost the last time it failed.

The Shellborn view the Deluge as a failure of responsibility. The old world drowned because power outran duty. The dry empires built what they could not maintain. They opened what they could not close. They trusted brilliance more than work.

This belief gives the Bastions strength. It also makes them judgmental. Shellborn elders may dismiss Coral Court ritual, Kelpway movement, Arkborn curiosity, Abyssal mystery, and Leviathan-Tide wandering as irresponsibility.

Younger Shellborn often push back. They know the Bastions cannot survive alone.

The reformer Odran Veyl wrote, “A wall that never opens becomes a tomb.” His words are carved in three holds and banned in seven.

Archetypes of the Shellhold Bastions

The three Shellhold Archetypes express protection, dangerous work, and craft.

The Shellguard is the armored defender of hold and convoy. A Shellguard is trained to hold position, protect others, fight in tight spaces, and endure punishment. They are not just soldiers. They are living gates. Their stories often turn on loyalty, sacrifice, and the cost of standing firm.

The Ruin-Breaker is a delver and hazard specialist. They enter collapsed districts, old ruins, sealed chambers, and broken Deepworks sites. They test floors. They read cracks. They mark safe routes. They know when treasure is not worth dying for. Ruin-Breakers are often more curious than other Shellborn. Their work rewards nerve but punishes pride.

The Pressure Mason is the great craft archetype of the Bastions. They build, repair, brace, seal, and judge structures under hostile conditions. In play, a Pressure Mason should matter whenever walls fail, gates crack, vehicles break, ruins shift, or Deepworks systems shudder.

They are not glamorous.

They are the reason others live.

A Shellhold Protagonist may come from any of these paths. A full Shellborn Shellguard may carry an ancient gate oath. A Shellkin Pressure Mason may fight for recognition in a strict craft house. A Ruin-Breaker may discover that the structure beneath their home was not built to protect anything.

It was built to contain something.

Adventure in the Bastions

Shellhold adventures often begin with failure.

A wall cracks. A gate sticks. A pump produces black water. A convoy vanishes. A sealed chamber warms. A pressure route opens without command. A work crew returns changed.

These stories suit One-on-One play well. Responsibility can fall hard on one Protagonist. The Director can place them in a moment where delay costs lives.

Which gate closes? Which district evacuates? Which relic can be trusted? Which ally is trapped on the wrong side of the seal?

The Bastions are also strong starting points for Deepworks and ruin campaigns. A Pressure Mason may discover that gates across the Blue Realms are failing in the same pattern. A Ruin-Breaker may recover a relic that marks the Bastion foundation as part of an old prison. A Shellguard may escort an Arkborn scholar into a lower chamber and realize the scholar lied.

Shellhold stories should feel weighty.

Not slow. Not dull. Weighty.

Stone has consequence. Duty has consequence. The past is built into the walls.

The Shellkin question can also drive a campaign. A Shellkin Protagonist may be sent to negotiate with the Coral Courts because their mixed heritage is useful. They may be denied a craft inheritance despite superior skill. They may discover that Shellkin have saved the Bastions more often than the official records admit.

The best Shellhold stories test the difference between endurance and stubbornness.

Shellhold Cultural Trait

Holdfast Discipline

A Shellhold character may claim +10 Advantage when resisting panic, holding position, protecting another character, or performing urgent repair under pressure. This benefit applies when discipline and training matter more than speed or elegance.

The Director may also allow this Trait when a Shellhold character follows emergency procedure, braces against forced movement, keeps working during structural failure, or refuses to abandon a sworn post.

This Trait should not apply when flexibility, subtle social grace, or delicate movement matters more than discipline.

Names, Holds, and Marks

Shellborn names tend to be strong and easy to call across work chambers. Common given names include Dema, Rovan, Tavros, Mera, Odran, Urr, Voss, Karth, Brenn, Thava, Orrek, Sulla, Garv, Noma, and Hask.

Hold names often reference stone, shell, pressure, location, or founding duty. Examples include Karth Shellhold, Voss Gate, Third Karth, Urr Deepwall, Stonewake Hold, Braceridge, Lowmarch, Sealwater, Ironreef Bastion, and Oathgate.

Craft houses use marks instead of elaborate heraldry. A hammer over three lines may mark a mason house. A closed gate may mark a guard line. A split stone repaired with a white seam may mark a family that survived collapse.

Shellkin sometimes carry two marks. One from the Shellhold parent. One from the other Bloodtide. Whether this is honored or resented depends on the hold.

A Shellborn's ridges may also be marked with mineral pigment for formal duty. White for mourning. Red-brown for emergency work. Blue-gray for gate service. Gold or copper for rare public honors.

Shellhold Story Seeds

A lower gate in Karth Shellhold opens by itself for the first time in three hundred years.

A Shellkin Pressure Mason is the only person who understands why a Coral Court-built reef seal is failing.

A Ruin-Breaker finds a chamber beneath a Bastion foundation that predates the Deluge.

A Shellguard refuses an evacuation order because their oath says the gate must never be abandoned.

An Arkborn Domewright proves that a major Shellhold was built around an old-world containment system.

A Coral Court envoy arrives to claim ownership of a pressure route the Bastion has defended for centuries.

A Kelpway guide warns that the living growth around a Shellhold has begun leaning away from the walls.

A Blackfin hunter brings back the body of a missing gate worker. The worker has been dead for decades.

A Shellborn child is born with bright Coral Court markings and a ridged crest matching an extinct noble house.

A pressure gate fails safely, exactly as designed, but no living Pressure Mason recognizes the design.

Shellhold Bastion Archetypes

Shellguard

A Shellguard is a wall that chose to move.

Shellguards defend gates, convoys, work crews, pressure routes, and the vulnerable spaces between one safe chamber and the next. They are trained to hold position when others flee. They learn shieldwork, formation fighting, evacuation discipline, and the blunt art of surviving the first impact.

Most Shellguards are full Shellborn, but Shellkin also serve. A smaller Shellkin guard may rely more on speed, positioning, or social access. A full Shellborn guard may simply lock into place and become very hard to move. Both are judged by duty.

A Shellguard's life is not constant battle. Much of it is waiting, watching, drilling, escorting, and deciding when a situation is becoming unsafe. The best Shellguards are not brutes. They are calm under pressure. They know how to move civilians through a gate. They know when to close a passage even if someone is still begging on the other side.

This Archetype is strong for campaigns of protection, siege, escort, duty, and hard survival. A Shellguard Protagonist may defend a failing hold, escort an Arkborn scholar into a sealed ruin, or refuse an order that would save a noble and drown a district.

Their heroism is simple to describe and hard to live. They stand.

Starting Skills

- Athletics
- Blunt Weapons
- Danger Sense
- Shields
- Tactics
- Intimidation

Starting Equipment

- **Shellhold gate shield** made from layered shellstone and bone braces
- **Heavy shell mace** or gate hammer
- **Reinforced shell-plate harness**
- **Emergency brace spikes**
- **Guard whistle-shell** for pressure-route signals
- **Repair resin patches for armor and shield**
- **Hold oath token** carved with gate-line mark

Ruin-Breaker

A Ruin-Breaker enters places that failed.

Collapsed districts. Old-world chambers. Flooded towers. Broken gates. Buried halls. Reef-grown vaults. The Drowned Realms are full of structures that were never meant to be entered again. Ruin-Breakers enter them anyway.

Some work for Shellhold Bastions. Some are freelance salvage experts. Some are criminals with better tools. The best are careful, practical, and suspicious of anything that looks too easy. They know how to test floors, read cracks, mark safe

passages, spot traps, and decide when a treasure should stay where it is.

A Ruin-Breaker differs from an Arkborn Relic Scholar. The Scholar asks what an object means. The Ruin-Breaker asks whether it will kill them before that question matters. They may not understand every old inscription, but they know when the wall is sweating, when silt is falling wrong, and when a door has been opened from the other side.

This Archetype is ideal for dungeon-like exploration, salvage, hazard work, trap scenes, and old-world mysteries. A Ruin-Breaker Protagonist may recover a relic from a flooded tower, find evidence of a hidden prison beneath a Bastion, or learn that the ruin they entered is still performing its original function.

That function may not be safe.

Starting Skills

- Athletics
- Deepworks
- Investigation
- Relic Lore
- Trapmaking
- Blunt Weapons

Starting Equipment

- **Ruin hook and weighted line**
- **Short gate maul**
- **Shell-and-hide hazard harness**
- **Chalkstone marker set**
- **Probe pole with detachable hook**
- **Salvage satchel with seal pouches**
- **Compact brace kit for doors, cracks, and unstable debris**

Pressure Mason

A Pressure Mason is the craft-hero of the Shellhold Bastions.

They build, brace, repair, judge, and condemn structures under the sea's weight. A Pressure Mason knows when a wall can be saved, when a gate must close, and when a whole district has become a tomb waiting to happen. In a crisis, their word may carry more authority than a commander's.

The title is not just technical. It is moral. A Pressure Mason is trained to choose survival over pride. A beautiful mechanism that fails is worthless. A plain brace that holds is sacred. Their work is done with tools, sweat, fear, and the memory of every disaster carved into Shellhold walls.

Pressure Masons are most often Shellborn or Shellkin, but any Bloodtide raised in Bastion craft could follow the path. A Coral-blooded Shellkin Mason may understand living reef seals better than their elders. An Arkborn-influenced Mason may know how old systems hide stress. This can make them invaluable and unwelcome.

This Archetype is perfect for campaigns where infrastructure matters. A Pressure Mason may repair a failing gate during combat, stabilize a ruined vault, inspect a poisoned pump, or decide which chamber must be flooded to save the hold. Their scenes should feel urgent and physical. They do not wave a hand and fix the world.

They put their hands on the crack and work.

Starting Skills

- Crafting: Hard Materials
- Crafting: Simple
- Deepworks

- Concentration
- Investigation
- Tactics

Starting Equipment

- **Mason's tool roll** with seal hammer, brace hook, resin needle, and hinge clamps
- **Hard-shell work harness**
- **Pressure chalkstone set**
- **Emergency coral cement plugs**
- **Vent-metal measuring rod**
- **Small blunt work hammer usable as a weapon**
- **Gate-line ledger token proving trade or craft authority**

Chapter Five: The Arkborn

Those Who Waited Behind Doors

The Arkborn survived because someone closed the doors.

That is the first truth. It is also the first accusation.

When the Deluge came, not everyone drowned in open water. Some fled into sealed towers, pressure domes, mountain vaults, buried chambers, and great arks built before the world broke. Some refuges were made in fear. Some were made by rulers who knew more than they admitted. Some were unfinished when the waters rose. Others were sealed too early, leaving desperate hands outside.

The Arkborn descend from those who endured within.

They carry old names. Old tools. Old maps. Old guilt. Their settlements preserve fragments of a world that no longer exists. They know words for dry winds, open flame, soil, roads, and sky-weather. Many Arkborn have never seen any of these things. That does not stop them from speaking of them with reverence, fear, or shame.

Other Bloodtides look at the Arkborn with mixed eyes. They are useful. They are dangerous. They understand vaults, relics, pressure domes, sealed chambers, and dead languages. They can open doors that should remain shut. They can read warning signs carved by hands that caused the world's ruin.

Some Bloodtides say the Arkborn are innocent heirs to survivors. Others say they are the children of cowards who hid while the sea took everyone else. The harshest voices say the Arkborn were not merely survivors.

They were selected.

The Arkborn do not agree among themselves. Some deny ancestral guilt. Some carry it as sacred burden. Some believe their duty is to preserve the past. Some believe the past is a poison that must be contained. A few believe the old world should be restored.

Most know better than to say that aloud.

Physical Form

Arkborn bodies show the marks of sealed survival and later aquatic adaptation. They look less openly bestial than many Bloodtides, but they are not unchanged people from the old world. Thousands of years beneath the sea have shaped them.

Their skin ranges through pale bronze, gray, ivory, muted blue, ash-brown, soft gold, dusky green, pearl-gray, and faint violet-gray. Some families have smooth skin. Others show fine scales along the shoulders, ribs, arms, or spine. A few carry faint geometric markings under the skin. These may resemble old seals, vault lines, pressure diagrams, or broken script.

Their gill slits are often smaller or less visible than those of other Bloodtides. In some lines, they appear along the neck. In others, they appear along the ribs or behind the jaw. Arkborn from older sealed refuges may have reinforced chests, large lungs, or unusual rib structure. These traits come from early adaptation rites, controlled mutation, or long life in pressure-managed chambers.

Their hands and feet are webbed, though often lightly. Their fingers tend to be fine and precise. Many Arkborn have eyes in brown, gray, blue, green, amber, pale silver, or dark violet. Hair remains common among them. It may be black, brown, copper, white, pale blond, sea-green, or silver-gray. Some families shave or bind hair for vault work. Others preserve old hairstyles as family rites.

Birthmarks carry great meaning in Arkborn communities. A child born with a pressure seal mark, a broken circle, a door-line, or a repeated old-world symbol may be watched carefully. In some vaults, such marks are treated as blessings. In others, they are cause for immediate examination.

Arkborn dress tends to be practical and layered. Seal-cloth, fitted harnesses, relic pouches, tool wraps, and protective gloves are common. Scholars wear record cords. Wardens carry key plates or oath rings. Domewrights often mark their sleeves or bracers with the systems they are licensed to touch.

An Arkborn may look plain beside a Coral Court noble or a Leviathan-Tide glider. Then they place one hand on an ancient door and make it breathe.

That is when people remember why the Arkborn are feared.

Vaults, Arks, and Sealed Blood

Arkborn communities differ greatly. A family from a mountain vault may have little in common with one descended from a pressure dome. A tower-born line may keep rites that no sea-floor ark would understand. Still, most Arkborn share one cultural fact.

They come from enclosure.

Their ancestors survived in limited space. Air was measured. Water was filtered. Food was rationed. Doors were sacred. Waste was tracked. Births were counted. Deaths were recorded. No one could pretend their actions affected only themselves.

This made the Arkborn careful. It also made them secretive.

The oldest Arkborn settlements still hold sealed chambers from the first age after the Deluge. Some contain records. Some contain machines. Some contain bodies. Some contain things that

speak when the locks warm. Not every chamber is opened. In many Arkborn communities, a sealed door is not a challenge. It is a decision made by ancestors who may have known more than the living.

The great Arkborn city of Arkspire rises around a cluster of old pressure domes in the Vaultwaters. Its upper districts are open to trade. Its lower vaults are not. Visitors see record halls, shell libraries, tool markets, and formal debate chambers. They do not see the Deep Ledger, the sealed engine rooms, or the black archive where records of failed refuges are kept.

Other Arkborn sites are smaller. Some are quiet dome-towns built around one functioning air chamber. Others are mobile salvage houses that follow old maps from ruin to ruin. A few are hidden entirely, their locations known only to bloodline stewards and selected Domewrights.

Arkborn identity is tied to descent, but not only to blood. A child adopted into a vault line may become fully Arkborn through oath, education, and record. An outsider trained in vault law may be trusted with certain doors. But some secrets remain hereditary. This has caused no small amount of bitterness.

The Arkborn say inheritance is duty.

Their enemies call it hoarding.

Both can be true.

Memory as Burden

Arkborn society is built around preservation. They keep records with near-religious care. Birth ledgers. Death books. Flood accounts. Failure logs. Door lists. Repair histories. Bloodline charts. Trade records. Warnings written in dead languages.

They do not preserve everything because they love the past. They preserve because forgetting kills.

An Arkborn child learns early that a missing record can be more dangerous than a blade. Which seal was repaired? Which chamber was opened? Which ancestor lied? Which symbol means "safe" and which means "not yet dead"?

The Arkborn have a saying: "A lost warning becomes a future corpse."

Record houses hold great authority. So do Vault Wardens and Domewrights. Scholars may argue for years over a damaged phrase. Wardens may refuse to open a chamber even when rulers demand it. Domewrights may halt repairs if a system behaves in a way no record explains.

This caution frustrates other Bloodtides. A Shellhold commander wants the gate opened. A Coral Court envoy wants the treaty verified. A Kelpway healer wants the old remedy now. An Arkborn record-keeper may answer that the relevant slate must first be compared with three copies and a corrosion index.

This can seem absurd.

It has also prevented disasters.

The greatest Arkborn shame is the Vaultrise Breach. In the sixth century after the Deluge, a faction within the city of Eshom-Vaul opened a sealed lower chamber believed to contain pre-Deluge weather craft. They hoped to recover a system that could calm destructive currents.

Instead, they released a pressure-fed growth that consumed three districts in nine days.

Eshom-Vaul is now a ruin. Arkborn children learn its diagrams before they learn formal law. The

lesson is not “never open doors.” The lesson is worse.

Sometimes need is real. Sometimes the door still must remain closed.

The Arkborn and Magic

Arkborn attitudes toward magic are divided and tense.

They know better than most that the Deluge was arcane in nature. Their oldest records describe flood engines, tide formulae, moon rites, life-vats, pressure prayers, weather towers, and sealed experiments. Many of these accounts are damaged. Some were intentionally censored. A few are clear enough to make readers ill.

Some Arkborn blame magic for everything. These families treat spellcraft as old-world arrogance. They favor records, tools, and hard procedure. They may still use Deepworks systems, but they insist such systems are craft, not magic.

Other Arkborn take the opposite view. They believe ignorance caused the disaster, not magic itself. To them, the old world drowned because it used powers it did not fully understand. The answer is not rejection. It is study.

This argument has never ended.

Arkborn Relic Scholars often stand in the middle. They handle dangerous knowledge because someone must. They identify old workings, broken devices, cursed inscriptions, and Deluge-era mechanisms. Their work may save a settlement. It may also tempt them into believing they understand more than they do.

Vault Wardens are more severe. They protect sealed places and forbidden records. Some are warriors. Some are judges. Some are jailers for things without bodies. A Vault Warden may spend their life guarding a door they have never opened.

Domewrights are the practical heirs of Arkborn survival craft. They understand old pressure domes, air vaults, atmosphere locks, sealed chambers, and environmental systems. They know how to keep an impossible room alive. They also know when a room is alive in the wrong way.

Among the Arkborn, magic is never just wonder.

It is evidence.

Relics and Deepworks

The Arkborn have the closest relationship with pre-Deluge relics. That does not mean they control them. It means they know enough to be afraid.

Relics vary widely. Some are simple old-world tools made from materials no one can reproduce. Some are broken devices with one remaining function. Some are engines built into rooms. Some are inscriptions that change when touched. Some are preserved organs, living keys, memory pearls, pressure diagrams, or sealed containers that should not be opened under any circumstances.

Arkborn Deepworks are built around containment and survival. Air vaults are the most famous. These chambers preserve dry or semi-dry environments. Some contain old books, cloth, tools, bodies, or fragile machines. Entering one is unsettling for most Bloodtides. The absence of surrounding water feels like a threat.

Pressure domes are more common. They regulate depth, flow, and structural strain. Some are still inhabited. Others are cracked and dangerous. A dome that fails slowly may produce strange weather inside: fog, salt rain, warm air pockets, or drifting dust from the old world.

Atmosphere locks are rare and prized. They allow transition between water-filled and air-filled spaces. Many are unstable. A careless opening can kill everyone on both sides.

Arkborn vehicles are limited but distinctive. Sealed survey pods, archive sleds, and pressure skiffs exist. They are usually slow, fragile, and expensive to maintain. They are not common transport. They are tools for specific work. A survey pod may carry a Relic Scholar into a dry chamber. A pressure skiff may cross a toxic zone for one expedition. A salvage crawler may cling to the side of a ruin while a Domewright repairs an exterior seal.

The Arkborn do not have vast fleets of old-world machines. They have a handful of working systems, many broken ones, and records warning them not to trust either.

This makes them powerful.

It also makes them desperate.

The Dry World

No Bloodtide is as haunted by dry land as the Arkborn.

They preserve words others barely understand. Forest. Road. Hearth. Snow. Dust. Fire. Field. Window. Sky. Some Arkborn rituals involve reciting such words before sealed images of places no living person has visited. Children may trace pictures of trees while floating in a vault classroom. Elders may weep before a painted horizon.

Other Arkborn reject this longing. They argue that the dry world is gone and deserves to remain gone. They call nostalgia a sickness. They say the Drowned Realms are not exile. They are home. This divide cuts through families.

The Dry Restorationists are the most extreme. They believe the old world can be raised, drained, or reborn. Most Arkborn communities consider them dangerous. Some deny they exist. They do exist. They seek old engines, weather towers, moon formulae, and forbidden maps. A few have infiltrated record houses. Others make alliances with outsiders who do not understand what they are helping.

More moderate Arkborn still keep dry-world customs. A family may celebrate a “sun meal” in a sealed air chamber, eating preserved foods grown in warmth and low water. A scholar may keep a book of surface birds. A Domewright may maintain a room with old-style furniture no one finds comfortable.

To other Bloodtides, these customs seem eerie. To the Arkborn, they are inheritance.

The danger is not memory.

The danger is wanting memory to become command.

Relationships with Other Bloodtides

The Coral Courts desire Arkborn knowledge. They want old maps, legal records, bloodline proofs, relic histories, and sealed testimonies. They also distrust Arkborn claims. A court can accept an Arkborn record when it supports a noble house and reject another when it threatens the same line.

Coral Court priests often dislike dry-world material. They argue that the old empires were judged by the sea. Arkborn preservation can look like blasphemy to them. Yet private Coral vaults are full of purchased records.

The Kelpway Clans treat Arkborn with caution. Arkborn maps can help explain sick routes, strange ruins, or old buried hazards. But Arkborn travelers often trust dead records too long. A map may show a safe passage where a hungry forest now grows. Kelpway guides know the past is useful, but the water in front of you matters more.

The Shellhold Bastions respect Arkborn expertise when old structures are involved. They also fear it. A Domewright can save a hold built over a sealed system. A Relic Scholar can identify a dangerous device. A careless Arkborn can wake something beneath a foundation. Many Bastions require Arkborn visitors to declare relics before entry. This causes arguments. The rule remains.

The Abyssal Kin hold knowledge the Arkborn lack. Deepwater histories often begin where Arkborn records fail. Gloam-Eyed elders may know warnings never written in any vault. Blackfin Houses may guard routes to places Arkborn scholars have searched for centuries. The Arkborn want these truths. The Abyssal Kin do not always wish to give them.

The Leviathan-Tide Peoples often distrust Arkborn attempts to fix living memory into records. To them, a route exists because it is traveled. A leviathan is known because it is followed, feared, fed, and watched. An Arkborn chart may be accurate and still miss the point.

The Arkborn are useful to all.

Trusted by few.

Religion and Belief

Arkborn belief varies more than outsiders expect.

Some worship the Ancestors of the Sealed Doors. These are the first survivors who closed the refuges and kept them alive. Their names are recited during repairs, births, and chamber openings. In some communities, the first door-closer is honored as a saint. In others, they are remembered with suspicion.

Some Arkborn honor the Builders. These are the engineers, mages, masons, and unknown laborers who made the refuges possible. Builder shrines often contain tools, cracked seal plates, old measures, and fragments of failed systems.

Some pray to Memory itself. Not as a god with a face, but as a duty. To remember is to resist the second death. To record is to keep faith with those who drowned.

A few Arkborn maintain dry-world gods. Their rites have changed. A fire god may now be honored through sealed lamps. A field goddess may be worshiped through algae beds and root trays. A sky father may be represented by a painted ceiling in an air vault. These rites can seem strange or sad to other Bloodtides.

The Deluge is the center of Arkborn theology. Was it punishment? Accident? War? Mercy? Containment? Betrayal?

Different vaults answer differently.

The most honest Arkborn answer is often: “We do not know yet.”

This humility is admirable. It is also dangerous. The desire to know can open doors.

Archetypes of the Arkborn

The three Arkborn Archetypes express the Bloodtide’s central burdens: knowledge, protection, and survival craft.

The Relic Scholar studies the old world through records, artifacts, inscriptions, and broken systems. They identify relics, interpret dead

languages, and recognize patterns that others miss. A Relic Scholar can turn a campaign by finding one true name in a damaged record. Their danger is curiosity. They know enough to open the first lock.

The Vault Warden protects sealed places and forbidden knowledge. They may guard a chamber, a book, a living relic, or a truth that would start a war. A Vault Warden is not only a fighter. They are a line drawn in front of the past. Their stories ask what must be preserved and what must never be released.

The Domewright understands old-world sealed environments. They repair pressure domes, air vaults, atmosphere locks, sealed refuges, and survival systems. They overlap with Pressure Masons, but the difference is clear. A Pressure Mason works with the living world's structures. A Domewright works with old sealed systems that obey older laws.

An Arkborn Protagonist can be an investigator, guardian, technician, heretic, exile, or reluctant heir. Their Bloodtide gives them access to truths other characters may never reach. It also places temptation in their hands.

The Arkborn do not merely ask what happened.

They ask what should remain buried after they find out.

Adventure in the Vaultwaters

Arkborn adventures begin with a record, a door, or a lie.

A sealed chamber warms for the first time in centuries. A dead language appears on a living child's skin. A pressure dome begins to produce dry wind. A Relic Scholar finds three versions of the same event and all are false. A Vault Warden is ordered to open a door they were sworn to protect. A Domewright discovers that an air vault is breathing.

The Vaultwaters offer many campaign paths. They are perfect for mysteries, ruin delves, old-world horror, containment crises, and political secrets. A Protagonist might be sent to recover a missing record from a flooded archive. They might escort a Shellhold crew into a dome that should not still have air. They might discover that a Coral Court lineage was recorded before the Deluge under another name.

Arkborn campaigns can also test the setting's central mystery. What caused the Deluge? Who knew? Who survived by chance, and who survived by design?

A single vault can change the answer.

The Director should make Arkborn discoveries useful and dangerous. A map should lead somewhere valuable. It should also leave out what changed since it was drawn. A relic should solve one problem and create another. A sealed chamber should contain truth, but never truth alone.

The Arkborn know the past is not dead.

They are the reason other Bloodtides remember that.

Arkborn Cultural Trait

Vault Memory
An Arkborn character may claim +10 Advantage when interpreting old-world symbols, identifying sealed structures, recalling preserved history, or recognizing relic architecture. This benefit applies when the subject connects to pre-Deluge survival, old refuges, Arkborn records, or sealed systems.

The Director may also allow this Trait when the character follows vault procedure, recognizes a containment warning, or identifies a system that should not be disturbed.

This Trait should not apply to living routes, ordinary wilderness signs, current-reading, or cultural knowledge outside the Arkborn's preserved traditions.

Names, Vaults, and Marks

Arkborn names often preserve old sounds. Some are short and formal. Others are inherited from record lines that no longer know their original meaning. Common given names include Eshom, Vaela, Corin, Tham, Isera, Dorne, Maelis, Orven, Senn, Kael, Veyra, Halos, Mirren, and Ossa.

Vault names often refer to origin, function, or founder. Examples include Arkspire, Eshom-Vaul, Glasshold, Tham's Refuge, Ninth Door, Pale Dome, Veyra Archive, Low Air, Sealreach, and the House of Closed Water.

Arkborn marks often resemble old seals, broken circles, door lines, script fragments, pressure diagrams, or record knots. Some are tattooed. Some are carved into tools. Some are inherited birthmarks. A person marked with a sealed-door symbol may be treated with respect in one vault and fear in another.

Titles include Relic Scholar, Vault Warden, Domewright, Record-Keeper, Door-Heir, Seal Reader, Chamber Steward, Archive Judge, and Key-Bearer. Some titles are honorable. Some are warnings.

Arkborn Story Seeds

A sealed air vault opens and releases dry leaves that have not decayed since before the Deluge.

A Relic Scholar finds a record proving that one Bloodtide existed before the world drowned.

A Vault Warden is ordered to surrender a sealed chamber to a Coral Court noble with legal proof of ownership.

A Domewright discovers that a pressure dome is being repaired from the inside by something unseen.

An Arkborn child is born with a living map under their skin.

A Shellhold Bastion asks for Arkborn help after a gate begins using pre-Deluge commands.

A Kelpway guide brings a sick root sample that matches growth preserved in an old disaster log.

A Gloam-Eyed elder offers a missing page from an Arkborn record in exchange for silence about where it was found.

A Dry Restorationist cell steals a weather engine fragment.

An old refuge contains bodies seated calmly at a table, still waiting for a door to open.

A Leviathan-Tide oracle claims that a great beast remembers the location of the first ark.

A record long believed to describe the Deluge is revealed to be a warning written before it happened.

Arkborn Archetypes

Relic Scholar

A Relic Scholar studies the world that drowned.

They read dead languages, examine sealed devices, compare old records, identify relic hazards, and ask questions that wiser people sometimes avoid. Among the Arkborn, Relic

Scholars are both respected and watched. Everyone needs their knowledge. Everyone knows what knowledge has done.

A Relic Scholar may serve an archive, noble patron, salvage house, sealed refuge, or personal obsession. They may seek the cause of the Deluge. They may investigate old engines, broken towers, drowned roads, weather rooms, pressure domes, or strange artifacts pulled from silt.

They are not necessarily reckless. The best Relic Scholars are cautious. They know that a clean inscription may be a warning. They know that a harmless object may be a key. They know that the past is never just past in Undine.

This Archetype is ideal for campaigns of mystery, ancient ruins, investigation, dangerous knowledge, and Deluge secrets. A Relic Scholar Protagonist may discover proof that a Bloodtide existed before the Deluge, recover a map no one wants opened, or learn that their own vault's history was edited.

Their great danger is curiosity with tools.

Starting Skills

- Arcane Lore
- Cartography
- Investigation
- Relic Lore
- Scholar
- Formal Magic

Starting Equipment

- **Water-sealed archive case**
- **Relic lens set in pressure bronze**
- **Bone-and-shell stylus kit**
- **Old-world symbol tablets**
- **Protective scholar's harness with sample pouches**
- **Small utility knife**
- **Permission token from an archive, vault, or patron**

Vault Warden

A Vault Warden is the person standing between the present and a door.

Some doors protect treasure. Some protect memory. Some protect the world from what lies behind them. A Vault Warden is trained to guard sealed chambers, forbidden records, dangerous relics, old prisons, and truths that could break alliances if released too soon.

They are not simple guards. They must understand law, relic danger, oath, containment, and the politics of access. A Vault Warden may refuse a ruler. They may kill a thief. They may choose to open the door when every law says not to, because the alternative is worse.

Many are Arkborn, but a Warden could come from any Bloodtide trusted by a vault line. Shellborn Wardens are prized for endurance. Coral Court Wardens understand legal memory. Gloam-Eyed Wardens know the value of silence.

This Archetype suits defense, mystery, moral conflict, and dangerous custody. A Vault Warden Protagonist may escort a sealed relic, hunt someone who stole a key, guard a living prisoner from the old world, or discover that their oath was built on a lie.

The role asks a hard question.

What deserves protection: the secret, the people, or the truth?

Starting Skills

- Blades

- Concentration
- Danger Sense
- Investigation
- Relic Lore
- Shields

Starting Equipment

- **Vault guard blade**
- **Compact shell shield or pressure-braced buckler**
- **Warden's key-ring with symbolic blank keys**
- **Sealed order case**
- **Light reinforced archive armor**
- **Restraint cord and lock seals**
- **Oath plate naming the vault, door, or record under protection**

Domewright

A Domewright keeps impossible rooms alive.

Arkborn refuges, air vaults, pressure domes, atmosphere locks, sealed chambers, and survival systems do not maintain themselves. They groan, leak, sweat, shift, and remember old commands. Domewrights learn how these systems work. They also learn when a system is lying.

A Domewright overlaps with Shellhold craft, but the difference is clear. A Pressure Mason works with the living world's structures. A Domewright works with sealed environments built under older laws. They may repair air chambers, stabilize pressure boundaries, restore ancient locks, diagnose sealed engines, or decide that a chamber should never be opened again.

This role carries great prestige among the Arkborn. It also carries fear. A Domewright may be the only person who can save a settlement. They may also be the only person who understands that saving it will release something worse.

This Archetype is excellent for campaigns involving vaults, sealed systems, old-world environments, technical mysteries, and emergency repair. A Domewright Protagonist may enter a dry chamber, repair a dome from the outside while predators circle, or find that a system has been running for centuries without any living operator.

The question is not whether the machine works.

The question is what it has been doing.

Starting Skills

- Crafting: Hard Materials
- Concentration
- Deepworks
- Investigation
- Relic Lore
- Scholar

Starting Equipment

- **Domewright tool frame**
- **Pressure bronze seal keys**
- **Airlock gauge shell**
- **Protective work harness with reinforced gloves**
- **Old-system diagram plates**
- **Emergency resin plugs and seal paste**
- **Small utility hammer and cutting blade**

Chapter Six: The Leviathan-Tide Peoples

The Moving World

The Leviathan-Tide Peoples do not ask where a home stands.

They ask where it goes.

Their clans live along the great migration routes of the Drowned Realms. Some follow worldwhales through the Blue Realms. Some travel beside vast ray-like mantle giants across open water. Some build seasonal camps on shed shell, reefed bone, floating platforms, and the backs of ancient creatures large enough to carry villages. Others never climb onto a leviathan at all. They move with the routes, the signs, and the old promises made between people and beasts.

To the Coral Courts, they are magnificent and inconvenient. To the Shellhold Bastions, they are brave but unreliable. To the Kelpway Clans, they are kin in motion. To the Arkborn, they are keepers of memory that refuses to be written down. To the Abyssal Kin, they are travelers who sometimes cross waters no settled people would dare approach.

The Leviathan-Tide Peoples do not think of themselves as wanderers without roots. They have roots. Their roots move.

A route may be older than a city. A beast may remember a trench before its name changed. A birthing ground may be sacred because the same leviathan line has returned there for nine hundred years. A death drift may be avoided because the water there still carries the grief of a fallen giant.

Their lives are shaped by scale. Not wealth. Not walls. Scale.

They live beneath shadows that can cover whole settlements. They read changes in the skin of creatures larger than fortresses. They know that a world can move slowly and still crush anything that refuses to move with it.

The Drowned Realms breathe through migration.

That is what the Leviathan-Tide Peoples teach.

Physical Form

The Leviathan-Tide Peoples are open-water adapted aquatic humanoids with strong ray-like traits. Their bodies are built for long glides, wide turns, and endurance in vast water. They are usually taller than Coral Court folk and broader through the chest and shoulders. They are not as heavy as full Shellborn, but their silhouettes can look larger because of their fin-mantles.

Their most distinctive feature is the broad fin-mantle. It may extend from the ribs, shoulders, arms, or back. In some clans, it spreads like a manta's wings when swimming. In others, it forms long side fins that trail in open water. These mantles allow graceful gliding and long travel with little wasted effort.

Skin tones often include storm-gray, blue-black, slate, pale white, green-blue, dark brown, deep indigo, silver-gray, and soft whale-blue. Many have ray-like patterns across the back, shoulders, sides, or fin-mantles. These patterns may be white spots, dark bands, pale rings, rippled lines, or broad markings like the shadow of wings.

Their eyes are large and dark. Black, blue, gray, deep green, amber, and silver are common. Their mouths are usually broad but soft in shape. Their hands are webbed with long fingers. Some have trailing sensory tendrils near the jaw, wrists, or mantle edges. Others have smooth skin with fine scales only visible in strong light.

Leviathan-Tide folk often mark adulthood by route. A young person who survives their first great migration may receive scar marks, pigment lines, or mantle tattoos showing the path. Clans that follow worldwhales often use long flowing marks along the spine. Clans tied to mantle giants favor wide patterns across the shoulders and fin-mantle.

They are poor landward movers and uncomfortable in tight built spaces. A Coral Court chamber may feel cramped to them. A Shellhold corridor can feel like a trap. Open water is where their bodies make sense.

When a Leviathan-Tide hunter spreads their mantle and glides beneath a shaft of blue light, it is easy to understand why some Bloodtides mistake them for omens.

Leviathans

Leviathans are not one species. They are the great living powers of the open sea.

Some are whale-like. These are often called worldwhales in trade speech. They have long bodies, deep voices, ridged backs, and slow migrations that can reshape politics. Their hides may carry coral gardens, parasite fields, shrine platforms, or whole camps built on hardened growth. The oldest worldwhales move like weather. A city can prepare for one for months and still be surprised when it turns.

Others are ray-like mantle giants. These immense beings glide through the Drowned Realms with bodies wide enough to darken whole districts below them. Their upper surfaces can carry reef patches, settlement frames, bone shrines, and traveling markets. Some are gentle. Some are indifferent. Some react to certain rites, bloodlines, or old wounds.

There are also stranger leviathans. Spiral-bodied deep migrants. Shell-backed carriers. Blind trench grazers. Serpentine route-breakers. Beasts with lantern fields along their flanks. Creatures that may be animals, old gods, or something between.

The Leviathan-Tide Peoples do not treat every leviathan as divine. This is a mistake outsiders often make. Some are sacred. Some are dangerous. Some are partners. Some are prey. Some are avoided for reasons no outsider is told.

A leviathan may be a route, a settlement, a season, a god, a disaster, or a grave.

Sometimes it is all of these at once.

Clans of the Great Routes

Leviathan-Tide society is organized by route, beast bond, migration memory, and clan obligation.

A clan may follow a single leviathan line for generations. Another may move between several routes. Some are tied to birthing grounds. Others guard death drifts, feeding roads, or open-water crossings. A few clans are known as breakers. They enter new routes when currents shift or old beasts vanish.

Their settlements vary. A route camp may hang from harness lines along a mantle giant's upper ridge. A worldwhale settlement may be built on old hardened growth, reinforced with bone, shell, and flexible cord. Smaller camps drift on platforms made from shed scale, woven kelp, cured hide, and salvage. Many are temporary. Some last for generations because the beast beneath them allows it.

This is never taken for granted. A settlement on a living giant exists by relationship, not ownership.

Children learn this early. They are taught to read skin tremors, breath shifts, feeding signs, parasite patterns, and changes in migration speed. A child who cannot respect the beast does not travel on its back. A careless clan can be thrown off, crushed, abandoned, or led into danger.

Leadership depends on need. A Beast-Speaker leads during contact with great creatures. A Harpoon Champion leads during a hunt or defense. A Migration Oracle speaks when routes change or omens gather. Elders carry memory, but no elder can command a leviathan by age alone.

The greatest gatherings occur at route crossings. Mantlewake is the most famous. It forms when several mantle giant paths overlap near an open-water shelf. For a few weeks, camps, traders, hunters, oracles, and beast-handlers gather in one vast moving market. Then the routes divide. Mantlewake dissolves. Those who missed it must wait years, or follow dangerous water to catch the next meeting.

The Leviathan-Tide Peoples are used to goodbye.

They do not always make it easy.

Memory That Moves

The Leviathan-Tide Peoples distrust memory that cannot travel.

This does not mean they reject writing. Many clans carve bone, tattoo route lines, mark hides, preserve shell plates, and trade maps with Arkborn scholars. But they know a written route can die. A map may outlive the current that made it true. A record may survive after the beast has changed its path.

Living memory matters more.

A route is taught by travel. A child learns the shape of a migration by feeling the water over days and months. They learn where the current cools. Where the great beast slows. Where parasites gather. Where old bones lie beneath silt. Where the water grows quiet before a trench.

Stories are told as the route demands them. The tale of a dead beast may be told only when passing its grave. A betrayal may be named only when crossing the water where it happened. A promise may be renewed each time a worldwhale turns toward a certain ridge.

This frustrates the Arkborn. They want stable records. The Leviathan-Tide Peoples answer that memory without motion becomes dry.

The old route-keeper Varess of the Wide Mantle once argued with an Arkborn scholar for seven days. The scholar demanded that Varess draw the complete path of a mantle giant named Oruun. Varess finally drew a perfect circle and placed the scholar in the center of it.

"There," she said. "That is your map. Now wait until it moves."

Arkborn versions of the story are less flattering.

Leviathan-Tide versions always end with laughter.

Hunting, Bonding, and the Sacred Wound

The Leviathan-Tide Peoples are often called beast worshipers by outsiders. The truth is more complicated.

They honor leviathans because one cannot live near such beings without awe. They also hunt. They cut parasites from sacred skin. They harvest shed plates, dead bone, oil, teeth, and tissue. In rare cases, they kill corrupted or dying giants before those giants destroy routes, settlements, or breeding grounds.

This creates a hard ethic. A beast may be sacred and still need to die. A hunt may be holy and still be tragic.

Harpoon Champions carry this burden most visibly. They are trained to fight large creatures, board hostile beasts, defend route camps, and strike with precision when size makes ordinary battle meaningless. A poor harpooner causes suffering. A good one ends what must be ended quickly.

The sacred wound is a common idea among many clans. It teaches that every bond leaves a mark. A beast marked by a clan is not owned. It is known. A hunter scarred by a leviathan is not shamed. They are joined to the route in a way no safe traveler can claim.

Beast-Speakers move in the space between reverence and command. They read behavior, calm panic, approach wounded giants, and negotiate with creatures that do not speak in Bloodtide words. Some use touch. Some use posture. Some use scent, pressure, or patterned light. The best Beast-Speakers know when not to approach at all.

A foolish person thinks every beast can be befriended.

The Leviathan-Tide Peoples know better.

Migration Oracles

Migration Oracles hold an uneasy place in their clans.

They read route changes, beast behavior, omen scars, parasite blooms, current shifts, and old migration patterns. Some are calm interpreters. Others are feared. The route can speak through sickness, dream, birth, death, or sudden silence.

A Migration Oracle may declare that a clan must leave a safe route. They may warn that a birthing ground has become unclean. They may insist that a worldwhale is avoiding a place because something below has awakened. Such warnings are not always welcome.

Oracles are watched carefully. A false omen can starve a clan. A true omen ignored can kill it.

Many Migration Oracles carry visible marks. Pale lines across the mantle. Clouded eyes. Skin patterns that shift near certain beasts. Scars from first contact with a leviathan. Some are born this way. Others change after an event no one fully explains.

The famous Oracle Thamora Ray-Shadow saved three route clans during the Sable Turn. She saw that the worldwhale Eshuun had changed depth not from sickness, but fear. The clans followed her warning and left the route. Three days later, a trench split open beneath the old path.

A later oracle named Vel Oruun made the opposite mistake. He claimed a mantle giant's refusal to dive was a sign of blessing. It was infection. Hundreds died when the beast turned on its own camp.

The Leviathan-Tide Peoples do not romanticize prophecy.

They listen because sometimes it is the only warning they get.

Deepworks and Moving Craft

Leviathan-Tide craft is built for motion.

They do not favor heavy walls or fixed machines. Their tools must flex, release, drift, fold, or be carried. They use living harnesses, bone platforms, shell anchors, parasite-lamps, pressure cords, mantle hooks, and current-rudder frames. Their craft sits somewhere between beast handling, engineering, and old ritual.

A settlement on a leviathan must never dig too deep. It must not bind flesh in ways that cause pain. It must not block breathing, feeding, diving, or turning. A platform that harms the beast is not only cruel. It is foolish. The beast may scrape it off against stone or dive until every occupant dies.

Harness-riggers are respected specialists. They know where a line can be placed and where it must never touch. They work with Beast-Speakers and healers. A poor rigger can wound a giant. A great rigger can save a whole traveling camp during a panic dive.

Leviathan-Tide vehicles include mantle sleds, ray-skiffs, drift platforms, open-water cargo frames, and beast-drawn current craft. These are not science-fiction vessels. They are sturdy, living-world craft that depend on route knowledge, trained creatures, and constant maintenance.

Some clans trade with Shellhold Pressure Masons for anchor plates and reinforced joints. Others use Coral Court pearl lamps or Kelpway living cord. Arkborn salvage sometimes appears in high-status platforms, though many elders distrust old-world parts that do not fail in familiar ways.

A Leviathan-Tide vehicle can cross impressive distances. It cannot ignore danger. Storm currents, trench pulls, predator swarms, sick beasts, and route changes can still kill everyone aboard.

The sea remains larger than the craft.

Attitudes Toward Magic

Leviathan-Tide attitudes toward magic are practical and wary.

They do not reject all magic. They use omen rites, beast-calming workings, protective marks, route blessings, and healing practices. Some Migration Oracles carry gifts that no ordinary training can

explain. Some Beast-Speakers can calm creatures no one else can approach.

But magic that disturbs a route is hated.

A Tide Magister who changes current near a migration path may earn a clan's anger. An Arkborn relic that confuses leviathan movement may be destroyed. A Shellhold gate that disrupts feeding waters may be sabotaged if negotiation fails. The Leviathan-Tide Peoples judge magic by its effect on living motion.

Their memory of the Deluge is shaped by this belief. The old world drowned because it disrupted forces too large to master. Perhaps it wounded the sea. Perhaps it ignored the great beasts. Perhaps it tried to command the routes of moon, tide, and depth.

Whatever happened, the Leviathan-Tide lesson is clear.

No one is large enough to command the whole world.

Some clans speak of ancient leviathans changing course before the Deluge. They say the beasts knew. They say the old peoples ignored them. Arkborn scholars argue over these accounts. Coral Court priests dislike them. The Shellholds consider them possible but unproven.

The Leviathan-Tide Peoples keep telling the stories.

They do not need permission.

Arcane Mutation and Great Beasts

Mutation among leviathans is one of the great fears of the Drowned Realms.

A small beast can be killed. A corrupted reef can be burned. A sick gate can be sealed. But a mutated leviathan can destroy routes, settlements, and entire regions without malice.

The signs may be subtle at first. A worldwhale changes its depth. A mantle giant refuses a feeding ground. Parasites blacken and fall away. Pale veins appear beneath the skin. A route camp begins sharing the same dream. A harmless growth on the beast's back starts pulsing at night.

Leviathan-Tide healers and Beast-Speakers watch for these signs constantly.

The worst cases are remembered by name. The Red Passing saw a wounded worldwhale carry Redbloom across five reef systems before dying near a Coral Court city. The Blind Turn began when a mantle giant lost both eyes to glass-vein growth and crushed three migration camps in panic. The Salt Wake was caused by a dead leviathan that would not sink. Its body drifted for months, poisoning the water behind it.

These events shape clan law. Strange growths are reported. Parasites are examined. Dreams are taken seriously. A hunter who hides a sign of leviathan sickness may be exiled or killed.

Arcane mutation is not always treated as evil. Some great beasts bear old marks without harm. A worldwhale may carry luminous scars that guide travelers. A mantle giant may grow pale patterns that predict current shifts. A route may become safer after a beast changes.

But no one assumes this.

Wonder can still kill.

Relationships with Other Bloodtides

The Coral Courts admire the Leviathan-Tide Peoples from a distance. Court artists love their broad mantles, route scars, and open-water

grace. Court rulers love the trade opportunities migration brings. Court officials hate that the Leviathan-Tide Peoples do not stay where treaties put them.

A Coral Court envoy may spend years negotiating passage rights, only for the route to shift with the beast. To the Courts, this feels evasive. To the Leviathan-Tide Peoples, it is simple truth. The route moved. The paper did not.

The Kelpway Clans understand this better than most. Both peoples live by motion. Both distrust fixed claims over living paths. They often trade route signs, medicines, cordage, and warnings. They can also clash hard. A leviathan migration can crush a kelp forest. A Kelpway medicine bed can grow in the middle of an old beast route. Respect settles these disputes. Pride makes them bleed.

The Shellhold Bastions are valued for craft. They make anchor plates, brace frames, pressure tools, and heavy repairs that route clans cannot easily produce. In return, Shellholds rely on Leviathan-Tide escorts across dangerous open water. The two peoples often argue about permanence. Shellborn defend one place for centuries. Leviathan-Tide clans say the courage to leave is just as great.

The Arkborn are both useful and irritating. Their records sometimes preserve lost routes or old leviathan sightings. Their attempts to reduce living migration to static charts are less welcome. A route is not dead because it has changed. An Arkborn map may be accurate and still wrong.

The Abyssal Kin are known through routes that cross deep water. Gloam-Eyed guides sometimes warn Leviathan-Tide clans about blackwater shifts. Blackfin Houses may guard cold corridors used by certain migrations. Ultharic signs are treated with immediate seriousness. Some leviathans refuse to cross waters touched by the Sleeper's rites. The clans remember which ones.

Religion and Belief

The Leviathan-Tide Peoples revere scale, motion, return, and the living mystery of the great beasts.

Not every leviathan is worshiped. That is important. A young hunter may respect a beast without kneeling to it. A clan may live on a mantle giant without calling it a god. Another clan may serve a worldwhale line as sacred carriers. Belief changes by route.

Many clans honor the First Turn, the moment their ancestors chose to follow the great beasts instead of settling among ruins. They say this choice saved them from wars over dead stone. Others tell of the First Back, when survivors climbed onto a wounded giant and were carried away from poisoned water.

Route shrines are often temporary. A bone frame tied to a platform. A shell mark placed on a beast's old scar. A string of lights released at a death drift. A carved plate left at a birthing ground.

Their dead are handled by clan custom. Some are given to the route. Some are placed in reefed bone. Some are carried until the next great crossing. A Harpoon Champion who dies in a sacred hunt may have their weapon broken and set into the beast's shed plate.

The Deluge is remembered as a breaking of motion. The old world tried to fix what was meant to move. It tried to command tide, moon, current, beast, and depth. The sea answered.

The Leviathan-Tide Peoples do not say the sea was kind.

They say it was larger.

Archetypes of the Leviathan-Tide Peoples

The three Leviathan-Tide Archetypes express bond, courage, and omen.

The Beast-Speaker is the mediator between people and great creatures. They read behavior, calm fear, approach wounded beasts, and guide clans through dangerous contact. A Beast-Speaker is not a master of animals. They are a translator of need, pain, trust, and warning.

The Harpoon Champion is the open-water warrior of the routes. They fight large beasts, defend moving camps, board hostile creatures, and strike with precision when size makes ordinary combat useless. Their stories often involve hard mercy. Not every monster should be killed. Not every sacred beast can be saved.

The Migration Oracle reads the movement of the world. They interpret route changes, omen scars, parasite blooms, dreams, current shifts, and the behavior of leviathans. Their gift is powerful and burdensome. A true warning can save a clan. A false one can destroy it.

A Leviathan-Tide Protagonist is well suited to campaigns of travel, monster hunting, diplomacy, omen, and large-scale environmental crisis. Their body belongs to open water. Their culture teaches them that home is not a place.

It is a path kept alive.

Adventure on the Great Routes

Leviathan-Tide adventures begin when something changes.

A worldwhale turns away from its ancient route. A mantle giant refuses to dive. A route camp finds black parasites in its water. A Harpoon Champion is ordered to kill a beast they believe can still be saved. A Beast-Speaker hears distress from a creature no one else believes is alive. A Migration Oracle sees a route passing through a city that has not yet been built.

Open-water adventures should feel vast. There are few walls. Danger can come from any direction. Weather above may matter. Trenches below may matter more. A shadow beneath the Protagonist may be a predator, a leviathan, or a moving piece of the world.

The Three-Plane Hex works especially well here. A beast may rise from below. A current may push the Protagonist into a mantle's shadow. A harpoon line may drag them into the upper plane. A parasite swarm may attack from the rear-left lower position. Open water should feel free and dangerous at the same time.

Campaigns involving the Leviathan-Tide Peoples can connect all other Bloodtides. Their routes pass Coral Courts, Kelpway forests, Shellhold gates, Arkborn vaults, and Abyssal descents. A single migration crisis can pull the whole setting into motion.

The best Leviathan-Tide stories ask what must move, what must be protected, and what must be let go.

Leviathan-Tide Cultural Trait

Route of Giants
A Leviathan-Tide character may claim +10 Advantage when reading the behavior of large sea creatures, navigating migration routes, calming trained beasts, or surviving in open water. This benefit applies when beast-lore or route memory is directly useful.

The Director may also allow this Trait when the character recognizes changes in a leviathan's health, identifies route danger, handles open-water travel, or uses their fin-mantle to glide through a spacious scene.

This Trait should not apply in cramped ruins, tight Shellhold corridors, sealed Arkborn vaults, or terrain where open-water movement is impossible.

Names, Clans, and Route Marks

Leviathan-Tide names often sound broad and flowing. Common given names include Varess, Thamora, Vel, Oruun, Eshuun, Maro, Sael, Ivara, Dhor, Kessa, Ruunel, Ossa, Thalen, Maura, and Vey.

Clan names often refer to route, beast, mantle, scar, or great events. Examples include Wide Mantle, Ray-Shadow, Eshuun's Wake, Blueback, Scar Route, Pale Turn, Oruun's Kin, Long Glide, Deepwake, Bonepath, and Seven Crossings.

Route marks are carried on the body, on tools, and on camp structures. A mantle scar may show first migration. A shoulder pattern may mark a beast bond. A harpoon notch may record a sacred kill. A shell plate may show which route a clan last followed.

Outsiders often mistake route marks for decoration. This is unwise. Some are maps. Some are warnings. Some are claims of grief.

Leviathan-Tide Story Seeds

A mantle giant changes route and heads toward a Coral Court city.

A worldwhale arrives at Mantlewake covered in black parasites.

A Beast-Speaker asks the Protagonist to help calm a wounded leviathan before Shellhold hunters kill it.

A Harpoon Champion is ordered to slay a corrupted giant, but the Migration Oracle says the beast carries a living settlement no one can see.

An Arkborn map shows a leviathan route that disappeared before the Deluge.

A Kelpway medicine grove lies directly in the path of a sacred migration.

A Gloam-Eyed guide warns that a leviathan has begun avoiding a trench where something is waking.

A route camp vanishes from a worldwhale's back without blood or wreckage.

A young Leviathan-Tide Protagonist develops omen marks after touching an ancient scar on a mantle giant.

A dead leviathan refuses to sink and drifts toward the Blue Realms.

A Shellhold Pressure Mason needs material from a shed leviathan plate to repair a failing gate.

A Migration Oracle dreams of a route that rises into open air.

Leviathan-Tide Archetypes

Beast-Speaker

A Beast-Speaker listens to bodies larger than buildings.

They read leviathan breath, mantle tremor, skin shift, parasite movement, feeding rhythm, and the strange moods of creatures that do not speak in Bloodtide words. They approach wounded

giants, calm route beasts, guide handlers, and decide when a clan must keep distance.

A Beast-Speaker does not command leviathans. Only fools claim that. They build relationship. They learn signals. They notice pain. They know when a beast is afraid before its movement becomes disaster.

Among the Leviathan-Tide Peoples, Beast-Speakers hold deep trust. A wrong reading can kill a camp. A true warning can save generations. Their work also brings them into contact with other Bloodtides. Shellholds need them when a beast panics near a gate. Coral Courts call them when a migration threatens a city. Arkborn scholars beg them to explain route behavior. The Beast-Speaker usually explains less than the scholar wants.

This Archetype suits travel, beast-centered drama, open-water danger, diplomacy, and environmental crisis. A Beast-Speaker Protagonist may calm a corrupted mantle giant, discover that a worldwhale is avoiding an awakened trench, or choose between saving a beast and saving the people living on it.

Their first rule is simple.

The beast is not yours.

Starting Skills

- Beast Handling
- Creature Lore
- Currentcraft
- Insight
- Survival
- Wild Magic

Starting Equipment

- **Beast-call pressure flute or pulse shell**
- **Mantle-line harness**
- **Parasite scraper and wound-cleaning tools**
- **Route-marked travel cloak**
- **Small offering pouch of oils, salts, and calming paste**
- **Curved utility knife**
- **Bone charm from a known leviathan route**

Harpoon Champion

A Harpoon Champion fights where scale makes courage look small.

They defend moving camps, hunt vast threats, board hostile beasts, cut parasites from sacred skin, and strike when a creature too large to fight must still be stopped. Their work is physical, dangerous, and morally hard. Sometimes they kill monsters. Sometimes they kill something holy because it is suffering. Sometimes they refuse.

Harpoon Champions are trained in open-water combat, line work, large-creature tactics, and the use of weapons built for drag, depth, and force. A good Champion knows where to strike. A great one knows when not to.

Among the Leviathan-Tide Peoples, this role is honored but watched. Pride kills hunters. Cruelty poisons routes. A Champion who treats every beast as prey will not remain trusted for long.

This Archetype is ideal for action-heavy campaigns, monster hunts, route defense, open-water battles, and hard choices. A Harpoon Champion Protagonist may hunt an Ichoran scar-shark, protect a mantle camp from raiders, cut loose a trapped worldwhale, or face orders to slay a leviathan carrying an unseen settlement.

They are not heroic because they are fearless.

They are heroic because the line is already tied when fear arrives.

Starting Skills

- Athletics
- Currentcraft
- Creature Lore
- Polearms
- Thrown Weapons
- Tactics

Starting Equipment

- **Barbed leviathan harpoon** with bone-and-vent-metal head
- **Heavy line coil with quick-release knots**
- **Open-water harness**
- **Curved side blade**
- **Mantle-hide armor plates**
- **Hook spikes for boarding large creatures**
- **Route token showing the Champion's first sanctioned hunt**

Migration Oracle

A Migration Oracle reads the movement of the world.

They watch leviathan routes, current changes, parasite blooms, moon-tide shifts, strange dreams, birth patterns, and the silence that comes before great beasts turn. Their visions are not always visions in the dramatic sense. Sometimes prophecy is a whale refusing to dive. Sometimes it is a ray giant changing speed. Sometimes it is a dead parasite found where no parasite should be.

The Leviathan-Tide Peoples respect Oracles because route changes can save or doom whole clans. They also fear them. A false warning can starve a camp. A true warning ignored can bury a generation.

Migration Oracles often carry visible signs of their work. Pale mantle marks. Clouded eyes. Scars from first contact with a great beast. Skin patterns that brighten near certain routes. Some are born strange. Others change after a journey, wound, dream, or encounter with something ancient.

This Archetype is strong for campaigns of omen, travel, mystery, and large-scale crisis. A Migration Oracle Protagonist may predict a route through a city, warn of a leviathan sickness, interpret a dream shared by a whole camp, or learn that an old migration pattern was designed to avoid something below.

Their burden is not seeing the future.

Their burden is convincing others to move.

Starting Skills

- Arcane Lore
- Currentcraft
- Insight
- Wild Magic
- Depth Lore
- Persuasion

Starting Equipment

- **Route-scar mantle wrap**
- **Moon-shell omen set**
- **Bone map of last migration crossing**
- **Small pearl or shell bowl for water-reading**
- **Fin-mark pigment kit**
- **Simple staff or hooked guide spear**
- **Token from a leviathan route, death drift, or birth water**

Chapter Seven: The Abyssal Kin

The Peoples Below Fear

The Abyssal Kin are not one people.

This is the first truth outsiders usually get wrong. To the Coral Courts, they are often "the deep ones." To many Shellholds, they are "blackwater folk." To frightened travelers, every strange figure from the lower waters becomes a warning given flesh.

These names are easy. They are also dangerous.

The Abyssal Kin are a broad family of deepwater cultures. Some live along trench shelves and cold slopes. Some keep quiet settlements beneath pressure-dark overhangs. Some build in basalt caves where no sunlit creature could breathe easily. Some travel through the Black Reaches as scouts, hunters, wardens, and seers. Others belong to darker waters. Those are feared for good reason.

The Gloam-Eyed are the Abyssal Kin most often seen in the upper realms. They serve as guides, interpreters, and omen-readers. They move with care and speak with restraint. Their presence unnerves many shallow folk, but they are not a monstrous people.

The Blackfin Houses are more martial. They are fishlike deepwater kin with strong house laws, cold-current territories, and long memories. They can be harsh. They can also be honorable in ways that unsettle outsiders.

The Ultharic Spawn are different. They are a dreaded abyssal priest-culture from the lower trenches. They serve Ultharuun, the Sleeper Below the Silt. Their rites are tied to ink, pressure, sacrifice, and final descent. Most Bloodtides fear them. Many Abyssal Kin hate them most of all.

This is the burden of the Abyssal Kin. They are judged as one body by peoples who do not know the deep well enough to tell one shadow from another.

A Gloam-Eyed guide may be refused entry because a Coral Court envoy once vanished in Ultharic waters. A Blackfin hunter may be blamed for a sign left by another trench culture entirely. A child born with luminous eyes may be treated as an omen before they are old enough to speak.

The deep teaches patience. It also teaches resentment.

Common Abyssal Traits

The Abyssal Kin vary more than other Bloodtides. Even so, many share traits shaped by darkness, pressure, and cold water.

Their bodies often show strong pressure tolerance. Their bones may be dense. Their movements may be controlled and economical. Many have large eyes, light-sensitive eyes, or senses that do not rely only on sight. Some feel motion through the water with skin, fins, ridges, or lateral markings. Others read pressure changes with a precision that unnerves surface-minded travelers.

Their colors tend toward dark, muted, or pale tones. Black-blue, gray, violet, charcoal, dark green, deep teal, silver-gray, and translucent white are common. Bright colors are rare outside ritual marks or house signs. Bioluminescent markings appear among many groups. These may glow along the throat, temples, spine, ribs, hands, fins, or eyes.

Abyssal Kin often dislike sudden brightwater. Some shield their eyes with smoked shell lenses or veils. Others suffer headaches, disorientation, or temporary blindness under harsh light. This is not weakness. It is the cost of being made for a different world.

Their settlements tend to be quiet. Sound carries strangely in the deep. Vibration can travel farther than speech. A careless shout in some places may wake a predator, signal fear, or offend local custom. Many Abyssal Kin cultures value restraint. Silence may mean respect. It may also mean warning.

The Abyssal Kin do not see the Black Reaches as a void. They see detail where others see nothing. A shift in cold. A distant tremor. A faint light behind silt. A predator's absence. A current that bends without reason.

To them, the deep is not empty.

It is crowded with meaning.

The Gloam-Eyed

The Gloam-Eyed are the most common player-facing Abyssal Kin. They live along trench shelves, deep road edges, blackwater settlements, and quiet monastery holds. They are often the first deepwater people encountered by travelers from the upper realms.

They are eerie to shallow eyes. Their stillness reads as secrecy. Their low voices read as threat. Their luminous markings read as sorcery. Yet most Gloam-Eyed communities are cautious rather than cruel. They know what waits below. They also know that panic kills faster than teeth.

Gloam-Eyed culture values restraint, memory, patience, and clear judgment under fear. A child is taught to move slowly before they are taught to move fast. They learn that a frightened hand grabs the wrong hold. They learn that light can lie. They learn that silence is not absence.

In brightwater, Gloam-Eyed travelers often wear hoods, veils, or smoked shell lenses. Coral Court hosts sometimes mistake these coverings for

discourtesy. A wise envoy asks before taking offense.

Gloam-Eyed Society

Gloam-Eyed society is built around depth-houses, memory lines, and vows of restraint. A depth-house is not just a family. It may include teachers, adopted kin, apprentices, rescued travelers, and those who survived a descent together.

Who taught you matters. Who witnessed your first deep trial matters. Who trusted you with a route matters.

Their settlements are spare by Coral Court standards. Basalt halls, black coral arches, pressure-stone shrines, and lantern-jelly gardens are common. Ornament exists, but it is subdued. A carved stone may record three generations of guides. A dim light may mark a place where someone chose duty over fear.

Gloam-Eyed law is quiet and exacting. Careless endangerment is a serious crime. So is false warning. To claim a route is safe when it is not can lead to exile. To exaggerate danger for profit is nearly as bad. Trust is survival in the deep.

Their leaders are often elders, seers, route-keepers, or pressure-trial witnesses. They do not rush to judgment. This frustrates outsiders. A Coral Court envoy may expect immediate answer. A Gloam-Eyed council may wait until the water is still, the witnesses are rested, and the signs have been checked twice.

Gloam-Eyed Belief

The Gloam-Eyed honor ancestral lights, pressure stones, deep guardians, and the dead who kept watch. Their rites are often quiet. A prayer may be felt through a palm pressed to stone. A memorial may be a faint light kept burning in a black chamber. A vow may be spoken once and never repeated.

They believe the deep reveals what is true. Not kindly. Not quickly. But truly.

Many of their traditions concern forbidden places. Some trenches are not entered. Some names are not spoken near open water. Some lights are covered when certain currents pass. These taboos are not superstition in the shallow sense. Many were bought by loss.

The Gloam-Eyed do not always explain themselves. This feeds suspicion. It also keeps fools alive.

The Blackfin Houses

The Blackfin Houses are another major player-facing Abyssal Kin culture. They are more outwardly martial than the Gloam-Eyed. They live in cold trenches, deep current corridors, cavern-towns, and fortified blackwater slopes.House colors appear in fin tips, scale patterns, eye-rings, or scar paint. Red fins may mark one house. White streaks another. Gold eye-rings may belong to a line of judges. Silver speckling may mark a hunting family with ancient rights.The Blackfin Houses are built around territory, oath, debt, and defense. A house controls water not by paper claim, but by memory, patrol, burial, and blood paid to keep it. A safe passage through Blackfin water is valuable. A broken passage oath is remembered for generations.

They are less patient than the Gloam-Eyed, but not reckless. They respect strength, direct bargains, and clear speech. They dislike soft threats. If a Blackfin says a thing plainly, they expect the same in return.

Blackfin Society

Blackfin society is organized into houses, hunting bands, sworn passage clans, and judgment lines. Their leaders are expected to defend as well as rule. A house head who cannot hunt, judge, or endure cold current loses respect quickly.

Records are kept through carved bone, scale tokens, scar marks, and oath stones. A promise made before a house shrine binds more than the speaker. It may bind kin, vessel, route, and future trade.

Debt is sacred. This does not always mean kindness. A debt of rescue may be repaid with protection. A debt of blood may be repaid with death. A debt of insult may wait for years.

Blackfin justice can seem harsh to outsiders. It is also stable. A traveler who follows the law may find them safer than any court. A traveler who mocks the law may disappear in waters that never give up bodies.

Their settlements are practical and cold. Cavern-towns line trench walls. Guard posts watch current passes. Bone markers show safe approaches. House shrines are often set where the current can be felt on the skin.

Blackfin Belief

The Blackfin Houses honor trench ancestors, hunting saints, deep-current spirits, and the first house mothers who claimed safe waters after the Deluge. They believe every current remembers what has moved through it. To foul a current with betrayal is a lasting crime.

Their rites use blood offerings, scale tokens, cold descents, and silent judgment. A young Blackfin may be sent alone into a current corridor to return with a stone, tooth, or bone from a marked place. This is not only a bravery test. It proves they can feel the water well enough to come home.

They do not romanticize the deep. They respect it. That is different.

The Ultharic Spawn

The Ultharic Spawn are a dreaded abyssal priest-culture from the lower trenches. They are not a people most Directors should treat as common Protagonist stock. They are a dark force in the

setting. They are also one reason many upper Bloodtides fear the Abyssal Kin as a whole.

This prejudice is unfair.

It is also understandable.

The Ultharic Spawn serve Ultharuun, the Sleeper Below the Silt. Their oldest temple-warrens lie near the Hadal Wounds. Some are carved into black stone. Others are built into dead shell, old bones, and deep structures that may not have been made by any present Bloodtide.

They believe the Drowned Realms remain unfinished. The seas rose, but not enough. The world sank, but not deep enough. Their rites seek the final descent of all things into Ultharuun's dreaming dark.

Their society is a temple order, a bloodline, and a spawning cult bound together. Priests rule. Hunters gather offerings. Scribes carve brine-script into shell, bone, stone, and flesh. Their settlements are rare and hidden. Many are not cities in the normal sense. They are temple-warrens built around spawning pools, dream chambers, and idols that pulse with old life.

The Ultharic Spawn use pressure rites, ink rites, blood offerings, and abyssal magic. Their worship is not metaphor. They believe their god waits. They believe it hears. They believe one day the world will descend far enough to be received.

Relations with Other Abyssal Kin

The Gloam-Eyed and Blackfin Houses often know the Ultharic danger better than anyone. Some of their oldest vows concern watching trenches where Ultharic signs have appeared.

A Gloam-Eyed route may be forbidden because a pressure mark was found there. A Blackfin house may maintain patrols against Ultharic hunters for generations. Some deep settlements have been abandoned after pale ink appeared on their stones.

Upper Bloodtides rarely understand these distinctions. They hear "Abyssal Kin" and think of Ultharic horror stories. This causes real harm. It also creates strong story material for an Abyssal Protagonist.

A Gloam-Eyed Seer may be forced to prove they are not tied to the cult. A Blackfin hunter may be

hired to track Ultharic raiders and still be watched by the very people they protect. A Coral Court ruler may use fear of the Ultharic Spawn to justify cruel laws against all deepwater travelers.

The deep has many enemies.

Ignorance is one of them.

Physical Forms of the Abyssal Kin

The Abyssal Kin do not share one body shape. That is part of what makes them difficult for outsiders to understand. Most Bloodtides have one recognizable form. The Abyssal Kin have many.

Still, they are not without common signs. Abyssal bodies are shaped by pressure, cold, darkness, deep current, and long separation from the upper waters. Even when two Abyssal peoples look very different, they often move with the same controlled care. They do not waste motion. They do not thrash unless afraid or dying.

Most Abyssal Kin have muted or deep coloration. Black-blue, charcoal, gray, silver-gray, pale blue, violet, dark teal, black-green, and translucent white are common. Some are almost colorless. Others carry dark skin with faint luminous markings. Bright color is rare except in house marks, ritual scars, warning patterns, or signs of mutation.

Their eyes are often large. Some are glossy black. Some glow softly in blue, green, violet, silver, or white. Some have reflective surfaces that catch even weak light. Others are nearly pupilless. A few Abyssal cultures rely less on sight and more on water pressure, vibration, scent, or movement along the skin.

Many have subtle gill slits along the neck, jaw, ribs, or upper torso. Webbed fingers are common. So are long hands, flexible joints, dense bones, narrow torsos, and compact musculature. Some have fin crests, lateral-line markings, sensory filaments, smooth facial planes, or reduced noses. Others show stranger traits from old abyssal exposure.

Bioluminescence is common but culturally controlled. A Gloam-Eyed traveler may glow along the throat or temples when stressed. A Blackfin hunter may show faint lines along the ribs when tracking motion. Other Abyssal Kin use light only in ritual, warning, courtship, or mourning. In some settlements, uncontrolled glowing is considered childish. In others, it is a sign of illness.

Abyssal Kin are usually uncomfortable in bright upper waters. This discomfort varies. Some shield their eyes with smoked shell lenses, veils, dark hoods, or pigment. Some suffer headaches or disorientation. Some endure it with discipline and say nothing. Upper Bloodtides often mistake this reserve for contempt.

It is usually pain.

Outsiders often lump all Abyssal Kin together because they notice only the strangeness. This is foolish. A Gloam-Eyed guide, a Blackfin hunter, and an Ultharic priest do not look alike. They do not live alike. They do not believe alike. Confusing them can insult an ally, provoke a house, or invite something far worse.

The Gloam-Eyed: Physical Form

Gloam-Eyed bodies are compact, smooth, and pressure-adapted. They tend to be smaller than full Shellborn and less broad than Leviathan-Tide folk. Their strength is not obvious at first. It

shows in stillness, endurance, and the ability to move through narrow places without panic.

Their skin ranges from pale blue to charcoal, blue-black, violet-gray, pearl-gray, and translucent white. Some have darker shading along the spine, ribs, shoulders, or hands. Others are nearly uniform in color. Their skin is usually smooth and cool-toned, with little visible scaling.

Their eyes give them their name. Gloam-Eyed eyes are large, dark, and reflective. Many glow faintly in low light. Blue, green, silver, violet, and white glows are most common. A few have eyes so dark they seem to swallow light rather than reflect it. In bright water, these eyes are vulnerable. Most Gloam-Eyed travelers wear hoods, veils, or smoked shell lenses in the upper realms.

Their faces are often smooth and quiet in expression. Noses may be reduced. Cheekbones are usually soft but high. The mouth is narrow. Gill slits often appear along the neck, jawline, ribs, or upper chest. Long fingers and light webbing help them grip stone, rope, bone ladders, and old ruinwork.

Many Gloam-Eyed have faint bioluminescent markings. These often appear along the temples, throat, spine, palms, or collarbones. The markings brighten with fear, anger, pain, or ritual focus. Some families teach children to control this response. Others consider the light an honest sign that should not be hidden.

Gloam-Eyed clothing is practical and subdued. Dark wraps, pressure-cloth, soft armor, hooded mantles, stone beads, and small light charms are common. They rarely wear bright ornament in the upper waters. In their own settlements, they may wear delicate black coral, pale shell, or lantern-jelly glass worked into simple shapes.

The Blackfin Houses: Physical Form

Blackfin bodies are sleek, fishlike, and built for strong swimming. They are usually taller than Gloam-Eyed folk but narrower than Shellborn. Their movement is quick in open water and sharp in tight current. A Blackfin hunter can turn suddenly with little warning.

Their skin is scaled or lightly plated. Common colors include deep blue, black-green, dark teal, silver-gray, gunmetal, indigo, and pale belly-white. Some houses have red fin tips, white streaks, gold eye-rings, or silver speckling. These markings often carry family meaning. They are not decoration alone.

Fins are one of their clearest features. Many have fin crests along the skull, spine, forearms, calves, or tailbone. Some have side fins near the ribs or hips. A raised crest can signal anger, challenge, fear, or formal attention. Young Blackfin are taught to control their fins in public, much as Coral Court children are taught to control their hands.

Their eyes are large and alert. Black, gold, silver, blue, green, and red-brown are common. Their teeth are often sharp. This gives them a predatory look, though among Blackfin it has no moral meaning. A smile can unsettle outsiders without any insult being intended.

The lateral-line markings of the Blackfin Houses run along the ribs, neck, arms, face, or sides. These lines are sensitive to water movement. They help Blackfin track motion, blood, struggle, and current changes. In some houses, the lines

glow faintly when the hunter is focused or when blood is fresh in the water.

Blackfin clothing and armor favor speed. They wear fitted scale harnesses, bone plates, house tokens, fin guards, and oath cords. Heavy armor is rare outside gate defense or formal duel. A Blackfin who expects to fight wants to move first and be seen second.

The Ultharic Spawn: Physical Form

The Ultharic Spawn are unmistakable.

Their bodies are humanoid, but their heads are cephalopod-like. The skull rises into a soft mantle shape. Short tendrils gather around the mouth. Some have trailing sensory filaments along the jaw, throat, or back of the head. Their faces do not show emotion in ways other Bloodtides easily read.

Their eyes are large and pupilless. Black, white, silver, and pale opal are common. Some seem clouded. Others reflect light too clearly. Their gaze is one reason so many upper-water tales treat them as omens of death.

Skin color varies by temple line and spawning pool. Corpse-white, ink-black, deep violet, bruised red, pale gray, and mottled blue are common. Some have shifting patterns beneath the skin. These patterns may darken during rites, hunger, anger, or prayer. Priests often mark themselves with ritual scars filled with ink, salt, or powdered shell.

Their hands are long and webbed. Their fingers are delicate but strong. Their bodies are usually narrow through the torso, with smooth movement that appears boneless to those unused to them. Some wear black kelp robes, shell masks, bone rings, and living ink veils. Others go nearly unadorned in temple waters, marked only by scars and pale symbols.

The Ultharic Spawn are not often mistaken for other Abyssal Kin once seen clearly. The danger lies in rumor. Many shallow folk have never seen one. They hear stories, then place that fear on every Gloam-Eyed guide or Blackfin hunter who enters their waters.

History Beneath History

Abyssal Kin histories are hard for outsiders to study. Many are oral, tactile, carved in dark places, or held by route marks that require deepwater senses to read. Arkborn scholars have tried to collect these histories. Their work is useful. It is also incomplete.

The Gloam-Eyed speak of the First Descent. In their accounts, the earliest deep survivors did not flee downward. They followed a warning. Something in the upper waters had already begun to change. Their ancestors chose the dark because light had become unsafe.

The Blackfin Houses tell of the Cold Claiming, when the first house mothers and fathers fought predators, hunger, and each other for control of safe current corridors. Those who survived became the first passage houses. Their law still shapes Blackfin trade.

The Ultharic Spawn preserve darker accounts. They claim they were shaped by the will of Ultharuun in the earliest age after the Deluge. Arkborn records hint that something existed in those trenches before the world drowned. The records are damaged. Some pages appear to have been cut out with great care.

One recurring name appears in several traditions: **Vaurith the Lidless**. Gloam-Eyed stories call

Vaurith a warning-seer who entered a forbidden trench and returned without sleep. Blackfin accounts call Vaurith an oath-breaker whose house name was scraped from bone. Ultharic fragments call Vaurith "first listener."

No one agrees on what Vaurith saw.

Most agree it should not be seen again.

Deepworks and Abyssal Craft

Abyssal Kin craft differs from the work of the Shellholds and Arkborn. It is quieter. It is often grown, carved, or endured rather than assembled.

Gloam-Eyed settlements use pressure-stone, black coral, lantern-jelly gardens, basalt chambers, and carefully shaped silence pockets. Their structures do not fight the deep as Shellhold gates do. They accept pressure and guide it. A good Gloam-Eyed chamber does not feel safe to shallow travelers. It feels like the water has stopped lying.

Blackfin Houses build fortified cavern-towns, current gates, hunting ledges, bone-marker fields, and cold-route watch posts. Their craft is sharper and more territorial. A Blackfin approach marker may tell you who owns the water, what price passage costs, and where your body will be placed if you break oath.

Ultharic craft is feared. Their temple-warrens use black stone, dead shell, bone, ink-veined idols, and living pools. Some structures seem to pulse. Some doors open only when fed. Some chambers change size when no one is watching. Most Bloodtides destroy such sites when they can. The Gloam-Eyed often argue for sealing rather than destruction. They know that breaking a thing does not always end it.

Abyssal vehicles are rare and specialized. Gloam-Eyed guides may use sealed descent glides for short travel through harsh pressure shifts. Blackfin hunters use narrow cold-current sleds, pulled by trained beasts or guided through natural flow. Ultharic raiders sometimes travel in dark organic craft that leave ink stains in the water.

None of this makes deep travel easy. The Black Reaches remain dangerous. Craft helps. It does not forgive foolishness.

Magic, Omens, and Mutation

Abyssal magic is feared because it does not behave like court magic.

It is tied to pressure, darkness, cold, memory, and unseen motion. A Gloam-Eyed Seer may read a current that has not yet arrived. A Blackfin oath-keeper may feel blood disturb the water long after a wound closes. An Ultharic priest may stain a chamber with ink that refuses to disperse.

The upper realms often call all of this dangerous. Sometimes they are right.

Abyssal Kin know many forms of arcane mutation. Gloomtouched marks appear among those who spend too long near blackwater wounds. Eyes may darken. Skin may lose warmth. A voice may seem to arrive from several directions at once. Some changes are survivable. Some are honored. Others are a death sentence in all but name.

The Gloam-Eyed treat mutation with caution. They watch the signs. They mark those who need care. They seal routes that become unsafe.

The Blackfin Houses are more severe. A house cannot risk a spreading taint in a narrow current town. Infected kin may be exiled, killed, or sent on a final hunt. This harshness has saved

settlements. It has also created ghosts in family memory.

The Ultharic Spawn cultivate changes that other Abyssal Kin fear. Their priests mark flesh with ink and salt. They expose chosen bodies to pressure dreams. They prepare spawning pools where old magic gathers. To them, mutation is not always a wound. It is a form of worship.

This is one reason the deep is divided against itself.

Relationships with Other Bloodtides

The Coral Courts fear the Abyssal Kin and depend on them. Court expeditions need deep guides, omen-readers, and pressure interpreters. Court politics also feeds on fear of the deep. A Coral noble may hire a Gloam-Eyed guide in secret and condemn abyssal influence in public.

Coral prejudice is often dressed as refinement. Gloam-Eyed stillness is called deception. Blackfin directness is called savagery. Any sign of Ultharic activity becomes proof of what shallow courts already wanted to believe.

The Kelpway Clans have a more practical view. They know the difference between a warning and a threat. Kelpway guides trade route signs with Gloam-Eyed travelers along the Dim Roads. They respect Blackfin territory when passage laws are clear. They avoid waters marked by Ultharic signs. Kelpway caution is not friendship, but it is often fair.

The Shellhold Bastions judge by gate and record. Some holds welcome specific Gloam-Eyed houses as trusted guides. Some hire Blackfin hunters for deep threats. Others refuse all Abyssal Kin entry after old raids or cult incidents. Shellhold law can be blunt. It can also be corrected by proven service. An Abyssal Protagonist may earn trust there, though rarely quickly.

The Arkborn seek Abyssal knowledge more than they admit. Their records often break off where deepwater history begins. Some Arkborn scholars believe the Abyssal Kin know truths about the Deluge that no upper Bloodtide preserved. Abyssal elders often answer that not every truth should be removed from the water where it sleeps.

The Leviathan-Tide Peoples cross abyssal routes during certain migrations. Some leviathans avoid Ultharic waters. Others descend near Gloam-Eyed shrines or Blackfin hunting grounds as if following old agreements. This has led to friendships, disputes, and strange shared rites.

Abyssal Kin are not isolated.

They are woven into the Drowned Realms by fear, need, and history.

Religion and Belief

Abyssal belief varies widely.

The Gloam-Eyed honor ancestral lights, pressure stones, deep guardians, and memory held in silence. Their rites are restrained. A hand on stone. A dim lamp kept alive. A descent made without panic. A name spoken once in the right place.

The Blackfin Houses honor trench ancestors, hunting saints, deep-current spirits, and the first house founders. Their rites are sharper. Blood offerings, scale tokens, cold descents, and oath marks are common. They believe current remembers movement and blood remembers debt.

The Ultharic Spawn worship Ultharuun. Their belief is total. They see mercy as shallow weakness. They see descent as truth. Their

priests teach that all things must one day sink into the Sleeper's dark.

Other Abyssal groups exist beyond these three. Some are small. Some are hidden. Some may be extinct. The Lamp-Blooded keep living lights in their bodies. The Stone-Gilled carve houses into basalt. The Mourn-Eyed tend grave trenches. The Hollow Lanterns carry ancestor lights through deep pilgrimages.

The Abyssal Kin are not a single creed.

They are a region of the soul.

Archetypes of the Abyssal Kin

The three Abyssal Kin Archetypes can belong to Gloam-Eyed, Blackfin, or other suitable deepwater cultures. They are less appropriate for the Ultharic Spawn unless the Director is building a dark or defector-based story.

The Trench Scout is the pathfinder of blackwater routes. They know how to move through pressure, darkness, and predator country. They are skilled at recognizing danger before it appears. A Trench Scout may be a guide, hunter, exile, messenger, or watcher of forbidden places.

The Pressure Monk is disciplined through body, pain, breath, and silence. They train to endure fear, pressure, cold, and disorientation. Some serve as guardians. Others wander between deep settlements. Their stories often test restraint. What does strength mean when panic would be easier?

The Abyssal Seer reads omens in darkness, current, pressure, and memory. They may be respected, feared, or both. A Seer can be a guide to truth, but truth in Undine rarely arrives clean. Their visions may expose old crimes, future disasters, or things the deep does not want spoken.

An Abyssal Protagonist is powerful because they begin close to the setting's buried fears. They know the upper realms are wrong about many things. They may also know that some fears are justified.

That tension should follow them.

Adventure in the Black Reaches

Abyssal adventures should feel quiet before they become dangerous.

A light goes out in still water. A guide refuses to continue. A pressure mark appears on stone where no hand touched it. A Blackfin house closes a route without explanation. A Gloam-Eyed elder asks the Protagonist to carry a warning to people who hate them. A Shellhold gate opens toward a trench that was sealed for a reason.

The Black Reaches are not just dark water. They hold settlements, laws, shrines, predators, ruins, and old boundaries. A campaign here can explore prejudice, forbidden history, deep survival, and the difference between mystery and evil.

A Gloam-Eyed Protagonist may be sent to prove that a disaster blamed on the Abyssal Kin came from another source. A Blackfin Protagonist may hunt an oath-breaker through upper waters that treat them as the threat. An Abyssal Seer may discover that a vision shared by many deep settlements points toward a failing Hadal seal.

Ultharic threats work best when used with care. A single sign can matter. Ink on a gate. A missing hunter. A dream shared by strangers. A pearl turning black near a trench. Their danger grows when the Protagonist understands that the

Ultharic Spawn are not only raiders or cultists. They are the visible edge of something deeper.

The best Abyssal stories ask what the world has buried and who paid to keep it there.

Abyssal Kin Cultural Traits

Because the Abyssal Kin include several peoples, the Director may choose the Trait that best fits the Protagonist's sub-culture.

Eyes of the Blackwater
A Gloam-Eyed character may claim +10 Advantage when navigating, searching, tracking, or detecting movement in Twilight, Blackwater, or other low-light conditions. In sudden brilliant light, the Director may impose −10 Disadvantage until the character shields or adjusts their sight.

Blackfin Sense
A Blackfin character may claim +10 Advantage when detecting nearby movement, tracking blood or disturbance in water, or maneuvering through cold deep currents. This benefit applies when their lateral-line senses or fishlike instincts are relevant.

Children of the Sleeper
An Ultharic Spawn may claim +10 Advantage when performing abyssal rites, invoking pressure magic, hiding in blackwater, or acting within consecrated Ultharic grounds. This Trait is intended mainly for NPCs or unusual campaigns.

Names and Deep Marks

Gloam-Eyed names tend to be soft, spare, and old. Examples include Veyr, Iosha, Nhal, Oris, Savael, Thir, Lume, Arax, Vessa, Oryn, and Mael.

Blackfin names are sharper and often tied to house identity. Examples include Karr, Thessa, Vorth, Ikran, Sarru, Kelvek, Ruun, Mavek, Dratha, Ossik, and Yrren.

Ultharic names are often difficult for outsiders to render. Common approximations include Ulvek, Tharuun, Osslith, Vaurith, Nhur, Salketh, and Iruun.

Deep marks vary by culture. Gloam-Eyed marks may be lights, stone touches, or memory cuts. Blackfin marks often use scale color, fin paint, scars, and oath tokens. Ultharic marks use ink, salt, carved flesh, and forbidden signs.

Outsiders should be careful when copying abyssal marks. Some are not decoration. Some are warnings. Some are claims.

Abyssal Kin Story Seeds

A Gloam-Eyed envoy is accused of causing a Coral Court heir's blackwater visions.

A Blackfin house closes a major route and refuses to say why.

A Shellhold gate bears an Ultharic ink mark that no water can wash away.

An Arkborn record names a Gloam-Eyed settlement that should not exist for another three centuries.

A Trench Scout finds a safe route where every old warning says there should be none.

A Pressure Monk is asked to enter a chamber where fear itself seems to have weight.

A Blackfin hunter seeks the Protagonist's aid in tracking a house traitor through the upper realms.

A Gloam-Eyed child begins glowing with a pattern known only from Hadal ruins.

An Ultharic defector offers to reveal the location of a temple-warren, but only if taken through Kelpway territory.

A Leviathan refuses to cross a migration route after passing above a silent trench.

Abyssal refugees arrive at a Shellhold gate. Something deeper is following them.

An old pressure stone cracks and releases the voice of Vaurith the Lidless.

Abyssal Kin Archetypes

Trench Scout

A Trench Scout knows the dark routes.

They travel through blackwater, cold corridors, trench shelves, and deep border regions where upper Bloodtides lose all sense of direction. They read faint light, water pressure, blood traces, predator absence, stone marks, and old warnings left by those who did not survive.

Among the Gloam-Eyed, a Trench Scout may serve as guide, messenger, watcher, or explorer. Among the Blackfin Houses, they may be hunter, patrol agent, oath tracker, or passage warden. Other Abyssal cultures have their own versions. The role is always dangerous.

A Trench Scout is not simply stealthy. They are patient. They know when to turn back. They know which silence means safety and which silence means something is listening. They also know that upper-water travelers often panic in the dark. Keeping them alive can be harder than avoiding monsters.

This Archetype fits exploration, scouting, pursuit, survival, and deep mystery. A Trench Scout Protagonist may escort a surface envoy through hostile deep water, track an Ultharic raider, find a route that should not exist, or discover that a sealed abyssal warning has been removed.

Their greatest burden is trust. The upper realms need them. They fear them anyway.

Starting Skills

- Currentcraft
- Danger Sense
- Depth Lore
- Stealth
- Tracking
- Survival

Starting Equipment

- **Blackwater hood or smoked shell eye-veil**
- **Short thrusting spear or trench knife**
- **Low-light marker stones**
- **Silent line and grip hooks**
- **Pressure-cloth travel wrap**
- **Small lantern-jelly vial with shuttered cover**
- **Bone route tags marked with abyssal warning signs**

Pressure Monk

A Pressure Monk trains body and mind against fear.

The deep tests every weakness. Panic wastes air. Panic grabs the wrong stone. Panic makes a traveler swim upward when upward is death. Pressure Monks learn stillness, pain control, breath discipline, body control, and the endurance needed to remain calm when the water presses hard.

Some belong to Gloam-Eyed orders of restraint. Some come from Blackfin houses that train oath-wardens. Others wander between deep settlements as guardians, judges, or spiritual fighters. They may serve at shrines, pressure stones, forbidden routes, or old watch posts.

Their discipline is not soft. Training may involve cold descents, darkness vigils, silent fasting, weighted meditation, and controlled exposure to fear. A Pressure Monk is expected to master the self before trying to master danger. Not all succeed.

This Archetype is strong for a Protagonist who solves problems through endurance, close combat, discipline, and moral restraint. A Pressure Monk may hold a gate while others escape, enter a fear-tainted chamber, resist abyssal influence, or confront a former teacher who gave in to the deep.

Their power is not spectacle.

It is the refusal to break.

Starting Skills

- Brawling
- Concentration
- Currentcraft
- Danger Sense
- Insight
- Survival

Starting Equipment

- **Weighted meditation bands**
- **Pressure-stone focus bead**
- **Reinforced hand wraps**
- **Simple dark travel mantle**
- **Short bone baton or hooked staff**
- **Emergency bitter-salt ration**
- **Stone token from a depth trial or monastery hold**

Abyssal Seer

An Abyssal Seer reads what the deep allows to be known.

They study pressure signs, blackwater visions, current changes, strange lights, old marks, and the behavior of things that flee before a disaster. Some are Gloam-Eyed omen-readers. Some are Blackfin current judges. A few belong to stranger deep cultures. Their work is respected because it is useful. It is feared because it is rarely comforting.

Abyssal Seers do not always speak plainly. This is not always affectation. Some visions are incomplete. Some truths become dangerous when said in the wrong place. Some signs must be tested against stone, current, witness, and memory before they can be trusted.

Their magic may use Formal Magic, Wild Magic, or both, depending on tradition. A disciplined Gloam-Eyed Seer may work through pressure marks and careful rites. A deep route mystic may read omens through living darkness and water behavior. Ultharic figures twist similar arts toward darker ends, which is one reason Seers face suspicion outside the deep.

This Archetype suits mystery, prophecy, investigation, spiritual danger, and forbidden knowledge. An Abyssal Seer may warn a city that hates them, expose a Deluge-era lie, or learn that a vision has been planted by something below.

Seeing is not the same as understanding.

That is the Seer's first lesson.

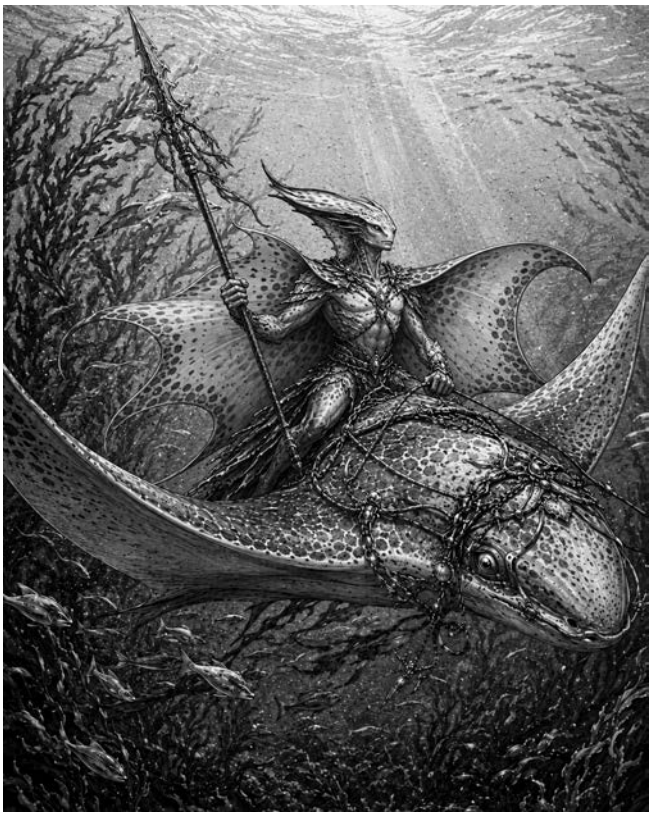
Starting Skills

- Arcane Lore
- Concentration
- Depth Lore
- Formal Magic
- Insight
- Investigation

Starting Equipment

- **Pressure-mark stones**
- **Black shell focus bowl**
- **Dark mantle with hood or eye-veil**
- **Bone stylus and slate leaves**
- **Sealed vial of deepwater for omen rites**
- **Small defensive knife**
- **Memory cord marked with witnessed visions**

Chapter Eight: Skills



Skills define what the Protagonist can do when the outcome matters. In Undine: The Drowned Realms, they also show how a character survives a world of pressure, depth, current, living growth, old ruins, arcane mutation, and dangerous craft.

The One-on-One RPG System uses the same core skill method here as in other modules. Each Skill has a linked Attribute. The Skill Base is equal to half the linked Attribute, rounded down. During character creation, the player assigns additional Skill Points as normal. A Skill's final value is the Target Number for Tests involving that Skill, modified by Advantage, Disadvantage, conditions, equipment, difficulty, and the Director's judgment.

Undine does not use a separate difficulty ladder. A Test is made against the Protagonist's modified Skill value. Simple, favorable, or well-prepared circumstances may grant +10, +20, or +30 Advantage. Harsh conditions, poor tools, hostile environments, dangerous pressure, bad light, or rushed action may impose −10, −20, or −30 Disadvantage. Degree of Success and Degree of Failure determine how cleanly the action succeeds or how badly it fails.

Many Skills work differently underwater than they would in a surface world. A good blade matters, but so does drag. A hiding place may be above or below. A hunter tracks by blood, broken silt, disturbed current, and frightened fish. A builder must think about pressure. A healer must know venom, brine sickness, coral infection, and arcane mutation. A scholar may need to decide whether an old inscription is a warning, a prayer, or a lock.

The Director should call for a Skill Test only when the result is uncertain and meaningful. If a trained character has time, tools, and no serious pressure, the task may simply succeed. If the scene carries danger, cost, or consequence, roll.

Master Skill List

The following Skills are used in Undine: The Drowned Realms.

- Alchemy
- Arcane Lore
- Athletics
- Bargain
- Beast Handling

- Blades
- Blunt Weapons
- Brawling
- Cartography
- Concentration
- Crafting: Simple
- Crafting: Hard Materials
- Crafting: Living Materials
- Creature Lore
- Currentcraft
- Danger Sense
- Deception
- Deepworks
- Depth Lore
- Escape
- Forage
- Formal Magic
- Herbalism
- Insight
- Intimidation
- Investigation
- Lockpicking
- Medicine
- Mimicry
- Oratory
- Performance
- Persuasion
- Polearms
- Relic Lore
- Riding
- Scholar
- Shields
- Sleight of Hand
- Smuggling
- Stealth
- Streetwise
- Survival
- Tactics
- Thrown Weapons
- Tracking
- Trapmaking
- Wild Magic

Specialist Skills

Some Skills are marked **Specialist**. A Specialist Skill covers a focused field that requires unusual training, cultural access, formal instruction, or years of practice. A Protagonist may still know about the subject through roleplay, background, or Lore, but using the Skill at full value requires proper Skill investment.

Specialist Skills are not automatically restricted to one Bloodtide. A Kelpway healer can learn Alchemy. A Shellborn Pressure Mason can study Relic Lore. An Arkborn Domewright can learn Currentcraft. The Director should use the setting to explain where that training came from.

Magic Skills and Schools

Undine uses two broad magic Skills.

Formal Magic covers structured, taught, recorded, witnessed, or carefully bounded magic. It is common among Coral Court Tide Magisters, Arkborn relic-workers, some Shellhold ward specialists, and disciplined abyssal traditions.

Wild Magic covers living, intuitive, ecological, healing, beast-bound, growth-based, or omen-driven magic. It belongs most strongly to Kelpway Green-Tide Healers, Leviathan-Tide route mystics, and other practitioners who work through living systems rather than formal law.

Spell schools are not separate Skills. They are categories used in the spell chapter. A spell's stat block lists both its **School** and the Skill used to cast it.

Common Undine spell schools include:

- Current Law
- Pearl Divination
- Greenwater Rites
- Brine Rites
- Pressurecraft
- Reefwork
- Relic Sorcery
- Moon-Tide Mysteries
- Abyssal Rites

Ritual magic is handled as a spell tag or casting type, not as a separate Skill. A ritual may use Formal Magic or Wild Magic depending on its nature.

ALCHEMY (Intellect) — [Arcane, Craft, Specialist]

Alchemy is the practical craft of tinctures, suspensions, lamp gels, sleeping draughts, smoke-vials, caustic brines, stabilizing salts, venom preparations, and all the sealed bad ideas that become useful if handled correctly. In the Drowned Realms, alchemy lives between medicine, sabotage, preservation, and dangerous craft. It is used by healers, ruin-breakers, Arkborn salvage crews, Shellhold technicians, Coral Court poisoners, and anyone who has ever thought the answer might fit inside a stoppered shell. This Skill requires precision, patience, and a healthy fear of making one problem brighter, louder, or more poisonous.

- Brew simple restorative, soothing, clarifying, or preservative compounds
  +10 with clean tools and a known formula; −20 with contaminated containers, bad heat, or guesswork
- Create volatile mixtures such as smoke clouds, flash powders, irritants, fireburst gel, or caustic brine
  +10 when measured and prepared in advance; −20 if mixed in the field or under pressure
- Distill useful reagents from kelp, fungi, venom sacs, coral residue, shell deposits, old salts, or strange ruin materials
  +10 with fresh ingredients and sealed vessels; −20 if the source is spoiled, tainted, or unstable
- Identify unknown vials, powders, residues, oils, salts, or bottled solutions
  +10 with smell, color, reaction tools, and

time; −20 if magically sealed, heavily diluted, or mixed from several sources

- Prepare one-use emergency aids for pressure sickness, venom exposure, lamp failure, field surgery, escape, or containment
  +10 if the intended use is narrow and specific; −20 if trying to make one mixture solve several unrelated problems
- Prevent accidental poisoning, ignition, corrosion, hallucination, or personal embarrassment while working with unstable ingredients
  +10 with calm conditions and proper ventilation; −20 near open heat, active magic, violent current, or helpful companions asking questions

ARCANE LORE (Intellect) — [Knowledge, Arcane]

Arcane Lore is knowledge of magic as a body of theory, history, signs, schools, and known dangers. It does not cast spells. It helps the character understand what kind of magic is present, which school may be involved, what failure might look like, and why an old working should not be touched. In Undine, Arcane Lore is closely tied to the Deluge, arcane mutation, spell scars, ritual sites, and the divide between Formal Magic and Wild Magic. It is the Skill for saying, "That is not just glowing."

- Identify magical schools, spell signs, casting residues, ward marks, ritual patterns, or magical contamination
  +10 with clear evidence; −20 if the magic is ancient, mixed, hidden, or deliberately disguised
- Recall famous magical disasters, Deluge theories, mutation categories, forbidden rites, or known spell traditions
  +10 with records or familiar culture; −20 if the subject is censored, secret, or abyssal
- Determine whether an effect is Formal Magic, Wild Magic, relic-based, mutation-born, or something stranger
  +10 when observing the effect directly; −20 after the effect has faded or contaminated the area
- Recognize arcane mutation signs in people, beasts, plants, structures, or water
  +10 with obvious symptoms; −20 if early, subtle, or masked by ordinary illness
- Advise on safe handling of magical objects, spell sites, cursed growths, or unstable workings

+10 with proper precautions; −20 if pressured to act quickly

- Support Formal Magic, Wild Magic, Alchemy, Medicine, or Relic Lore with theoretical knowledge
  +10 when the fields overlap clearly; −20 when theory conflicts with living conditions

ATHLETICS (Might) — [Physical]

Athletics covers strength, force, endurance of effort, climbing, hauling, jumping from surface to surface, carrying weight, and raw bodily exertion. In Undine, it does not replace Currentcraft for active underwater movement, but it matters whenever muscle, strain, or physical power is the main issue. A Shellborn bracing a gate, a Harpoon Champion dragging a line, or a Ruin-Breaker forcing open a jammed hatch may all rely on Athletics. The Skill is direct, physical, and often punishing.

- Lift, drag, haul, brace, or force heavy objects under water
  +10 with leverage, help, or proper rigging; −20 while injured, rushed, or fighting current drag
- Climb through ruins, shell walls, bone ladders, vertical wreckage, or rough stone
  +10 with handholds and calm water; −20 if slick, crumbling, dark, or under attack
- Hold a position against impact, pull, collapse, or forced movement
  +10 with bracing points or stable footing; −20 in open water, strong current, or silted ground
- Break, bend, shove, or force physical barriers
  +10 against weakened, corroded, or poorly maintained materials; −20 against pressure-sealed, reinforced, or living structures
- Carry another character, heavy gear, salvage, or wounded allies through danger
  +10 with harnesses or buoyancy aids; −20 while pursued, exhausted, or moving through tight terrain
- Endure hard physical labor over time, such as emergency repair, hauling stone, or working a gate by hand
  +10 with rest and proper crew rotation; −20 under pressure failure, poison, injury, or bad air pockets

BARGAIN (Presence) — [Social]

Bargain is the Skill of trade, negotiation, price, contract, exchange, and practical compromise. It is used in markets, court halls, caravan stops, route gatherings, Shellhold work contracts, Arkborn salvage claims, and Leviathan-Tide seasonal trades. Bargain is not the same as Persuasion. It is less about making someone like you and more about getting a deal both sides can accept or at least survive. In the Drowned Realms, a bargain may involve pearls, tools, medicine, route rights, pressure access, relic fragments, escort duty, or silence.

- Negotiate the price of goods, services, escort, tools, medicine, salvage, or information
  +10 with fair terms and local currency; −20 if desperate, foreign, or visibly ignorant of value
- Arrange contracts between Bloodtides, factions, houses, crews, or settlements

+10 with witnesses and clear terms; −20 when old grievances, caste rules, or hidden obligations apply

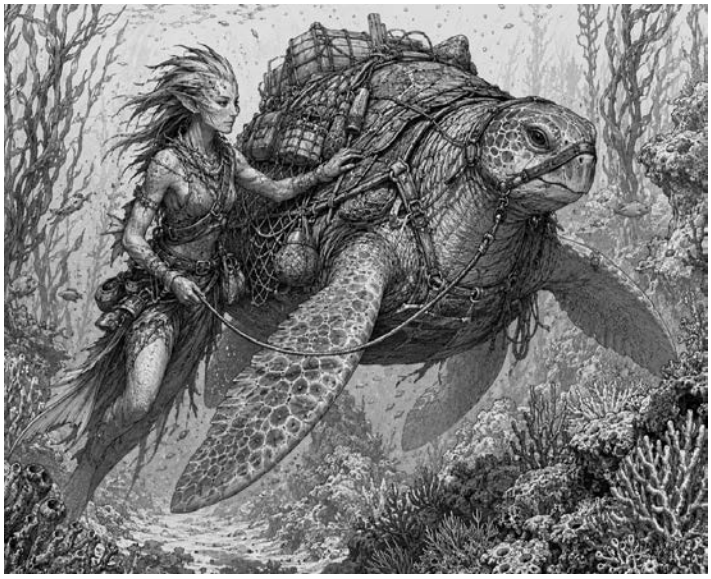
- Trade for scarce materials such as vent-metal, pearl lenses, coral cement, healing growths, or relic components
  +10 with desirable goods or strong reputation; −20 during shortage, crisis, or restricted access
- Recognize unfair terms, hidden costs, debt traps, or insulting offers
  +10 when familiar with the culture; −20 when dealing with unknown customs or deliberately obscure law
- Secure passage, shelter, repair, guide service, or safe conduct through negotiation
  +10 when offering immediate value; −20 if the route is sacred, dangerous, or politically contested
- Reduce the cost of failure after a bad deal, broken promise, or disputed claim
  +10 with restitution or a face-saving offer; −20 if pride, public shame, or blood debt is involved

BEAST HANDLING (Presence) — [Animal, Social]

Beast Handling covers the training, calming, guiding, reading, and commanding of living creatures. In Undine, this includes eels, rays, shellbeasts, riding fish, trained scouts, pack creatures, warning animals, small predators, and the lesser attendants of leviathan routes. It does not allow a character to casually command true leviathans, but it may help read their behavior or approach them safely under the right circumstances. The Skill combines patience, body language, courage, and respect for creatures that do not care about Bloodtide politics.

- Calm a frightened, injured, hungry, or aggressive animal
  +10 if the creature is trained or familiar; −20 if it is wounded, starving, corrupted, or surrounded by panic
- Train a creature to carry messages, pull a sled, guard an area, follow a scent, or respond to simple signals
  +10 with time and proper food; −20 if rushed, mistreated, or using an unsuitable species
- Ride, guide, or direct trained sea creatures during travel or danger
  +10 on familiar routes or calm water; −20 in violent current, heavy silt, combat, or unfamiliar depth
- Read animal behavior for signs of predators, sickness, route changes, arcane contamination, or pressure distress
  +10 if observing several creatures over time; −20 if the signs are masked by magic, fear, or unnatural mutation
- Handle large route-beasts, ray mounts, shell-haulers, or trained open-water creatures
  +10 with proper tack and handlers; −20 if the creature is too large, angry, sick, or bonded to someone else
- Approach a leviathan, mantle giant, worldwhale, or other vast creature with caution and respect
  +10 with guidance from a Beast-Speaker or route clan; −20 if the creature is

wounded, corrupted, breeding, dying, or protecting young



BLADES (Grace) — [Combat, Weapon]

Blades covers knives, swords, short blades, shell knives, spine blades, cutting hooks, reef sabers, and similar edged weapons. Underwater, cutting weapons require control. Wide swings are slowed by drag, but short cuts, thrusting angles, and close work can be deadly. Coral Court duelists, Kelpway hunters, Arkborn vault guards, and many smugglers favor blades because they are precise and easy to carry. A blade is useful in a fight, in a net, at a lock, or when a polite conversation becomes less polite.

- Attack with a knife, sword, saber, shell blade, or similar edged weapon
  +10 with space, balance, and a suitable weapon; −20 in heavy current, cramped growth, or against armored shell
- Use short controlled cuts in close quarters or against tangled enemies
  +10 when grappling, cutting free, or fighting in narrow spaces; −20 if the target has heavy armor or thick hide
- Perform formal dueling techniques, especially in Coral Court or ceremonial contexts
  +10 when the rules and terrain are familiar; −20 when fighting dirty, rushed, or outside expected forms
- Cut nets, lines, bindings, plant growth, parasite strands, or emergency restraints
  +10 with a sharp tool and steady hand; −20 while panicked, dragged, or unable to see clearly
- Parry, bind, or redirect another close weapon in a Contest
  +10 with a balanced weapon; −20 against heavy weapons, polearms, or attacks from above or below
- Use a blade for silent violence, assassination, or precise disabling strikes
  +10 from surprise or concealment; −20 against alert, armored, or many-limbed foes

BLUNT WEAPONS (Might) — [Combat, Weapon]

Blunt Weapons covers hammers, clubs, maces, weighted rods, gate mauls, shell crushers, stone batons, and heavy impact tools used as weapons. These weapons work well where cutting fails. Shellborn guards, Pressure Masons, ruin crews, and fortress defenders often favor them. In water, blunt attacks depend on leverage, short arcs, and mass rather than wide swings. A good hammer can break armor, crack bone, stun a predator, or convince a sealed mechanism that negotiation has ended.

- Attack with hammers, clubs, maces, weighted tools, or impact weapons
  +10 against brittle, armored, or shell-plated targets; −20 in open water without bracing
- Break coral growth, stone fixtures, locks, hinges, bone plates, or weakened barriers
  +10 with proper angle and leverage; −20 against flexible materials or pressure-reinforced structures
- Stun, stagger, or drive back an enemy through force
  +10 with a strong stance or bracing point; −20 against huge creatures or targets with no solid body
- Use work tools as emergency weapons during repair, salvage, or ruin exploration
  +10 when the tool is suited to the task; −20 if improvised poorly or likely to break
- Fight in tight corridors, gatehouses, wrecks, or Shellhold passages
  +10 when the weapon is short and heavy; −20 when wide motion is required
- Smash parasites, small swarms, brittle constructs, or exposed weak points
  +10 if the target is pinned or attached; −20 if it is fast, soft-bodied, or dispersed

BRAWLING (Might) — [Combat, Physical]

Brawling covers unarmed fighting, grappling, holds, strikes, shoves, bites, body checks, and close struggle. Underwater, brawling is less about punching and more about control. A strong fighter can pin an enemy against stone, twist a weapon arm, shove someone into a current, or hold a foe until an ally can act. Shellborn, Blackfin hunters, Pressure Monks, guards, and desperate smugglers all use Brawling in different ways. It is ugly, direct, and often useful when weapons are lost.

- Strike, shove, grapple, or restrain an enemy at close range
  +10 with size, strength, or surprise; −20 against slippery, many-limbed, or spined creatures
- Hold an enemy in place, pin them to terrain, or stop them from escaping
  +10 with leverage or a bracing point; −20 in open water or strong current
- Disarm, trip, wrench, or force an opponent into a worse position
  +10 after winning initiative or position; −20 against trained fighters or enemies with natural weapons
- Fight while tangled, dragged, netted, or trapped in close quarters
  +10 if calm and trained; −20 if blinded, panicked, or wounded
- Push, pull, or redirect a target on the Three-Plane Hex through bodily force
  +10 when braced or larger; −20 if the target is heavier, anchored, or moving with the current
- Use natural traits such as Shellborn strength, Blackfin teeth, or Abyssal pressure endurance in a struggle
  +10 when the trait directly helps; −20 if the environment favors the opponent's body instead

CARTOGRAPHY (Intellect) — [Lore, Travel, Specialist]

Cartography is the skill of reading, creating, correcting, and interpreting maps in a world where routes shift with current, depth, pressure, reef

growth, ruin collapse, leviathan migration, and old magic. In Undine, a map is rarely a flat drawing of places. It may be a pearl-string route chart, a carved shell tablet, a layered depth diagram, a coral-marked travel record, a current-wheel, a relic projection, or a memory map copied from an Arkborn archive. Cartography is used by route guides, Arkborn scholars, Shellhold engineers, smugglers, migration scouts, relic hunters, and anyone who knows that being "near" a place does not mean being able to reach it safely.

• Read ordinary route maps, reef charts, shell tablets, pearl-string maps, and depth diagrams
• +10 with a clear, recent map; −20 if the map is damaged, symbolic, outdated, or from another Bloodtide tradition

• Plot safe travel through reefs, kelpways, ruins, trench roads, pressure gates, or open-water routes
• +10 with local reports or a known landmark; −20 in silt, darkness, stormwater, or shifting current

• Create a useful map while traveling through unfamiliar territory
• +10 when moving slowly and recording carefully; −20 while fleeing, fighting, descending rapidly, or crossing unstable terrain

• Compare two or more maps to find false routes, missing chambers, hidden passages, or changed terrain
• +10 with access to reliable records; −20 if one map is deliberately misleading or distorted by old magic

• Interpret vertical routes, depth bands, current paths, and three-dimensional travel hazards
• +10 in familiar depth bands; −20 when mapping far outside the character's native depth or in a pressure-distorted region

• Use relic maps, projected diagrams, Arkborn archive charts, or old-world city plans
• +10 with Relic Lore support or a functioning viewer; −20 if the map was made for surface travel, air chambers, or pre-Deluge architecture

• Mark a safe return route through confusing terrain
• +10 with time to place markers or guide-signs; −20 if predators, hostile patrols, Redbloom growth, or current shifts disturb the route

• Identify whether a route has changed since the map was made
• +10 with visible current signs, reef growth, or recent traveler marks; −20 if the change is caused by magic, pressure collapse, or deliberate concealment

• Assist travel planning for a group, caravan, mounted route, or salvage expedition
• +10 with proper supplies and agreed destination points; −20 if the group includes heavy cargo, wounded travelers, or creatures with different depth tolerances

• Recognize map symbols, route codes, Bloodtide markings, smuggler signs, or old warning marks
• +10 with experience in the region; −20 if the markings are archaic, secret, damaged, or intentionally disguised

CONCENTRATION (Resolve) — [Mental]

Concentration is the ability to maintain focus under fear, pain, pressure, distraction, magic, injury, and chaos. It is vital for spellcasters, healers, scouts, duelists, and anyone working under dangerous conditions. In Undine, Concentration often matters when the water itself becomes hostile: pressure rises, light fails, currents drag, or something ancient begins to move nearby. A character with strong Concentration can finish the task while everyone else is thinking about survival.

- Maintain a spell, ritual, delicate task, or repair while under threat
  +10 in a controlled workspace; −20 during combat, collapse, pressure failure, or injury
- Resist distraction from pain, fear, visions, deepwater sounds, or magical interference
  +10 with preparation or training; −20 when surprised, exhausted, or already wounded
- Stay calm while descending, entering blackwater, crossing unstable ruins, or facing unnatural creatures
  +10 with familiar procedures; −20 when isolated, lost, or out of native depth
- Continue reading, crafting, healing, or lock work during a crisis
  +10 when the task is practiced; −20 when the consequences of failure are immediate and severe
- Resist panic during tight spaces, dark water, silt clouds, or collapsing chambers
  +10 with a guide, anchor, or known exit; −20 if trapped, alone, or running out of safe options
- Hold mental discipline against omen visions, pearl memories, abyssal pressure, or mutation symptoms
  +10 with ritual grounding; −20 if the vision is personal, painful, or tied to the character's Bloodtide

CRAFTING: SIMPLE (Intellect) — [Craft]

Crafting: Simple covers common making, repair, assembly, field fixes, basic tools, household items, containers, fasteners, harnesses, and everyday gear. This is the Skill for practical hands rather than specialized engineering. In Undine, simple craft may involve shell, bone, cord, treated kelp, hide, stone, resin, glass fragments, salvage scraps, or whatever a traveler can keep from drifting away. Many cultures respect fine work, but every culture respects someone who can fix the thing that just broke.

- Repair common tools, containers, straps, harnesses, lamps, simple weapons, or travel gear
  +10 with proper materials and time; −20 when rushed, wet-blinded, or missing basic parts

- Make simple shell, bone, kelp, hide, cord, or resin items for daily use
  +10 with familiar materials; −20 with rare, brittle, or contaminated materials
- Improvise field solutions such as patches, wedges, ties, floats, grips, or emergency braces
  +10 with salvage nearby; −20 under combat, pressure stress, or strong current
- Maintain packs, skiffs, sleds, riding tack, tool rolls, and personal equipment
  +10 during downtime; −20 if the gear is damaged by acid, mutation, or old magic
- Build simple traps, markers, warning signs, route ties, or camp fixtures
  +10 with local knowledge; −20 if hiding the work from skilled searchers
- Judge whether everyday gear is safe, shoddy, repaired, counterfeit, or likely to fail
  +10 with inspection time; −20 if disguised, polished for sale, or made by an unfamiliar culture

CRAFTING: HARD MATERIALS (Intellect) — [Craft, Specialist]

Crafting: Hard Materials covers metal, vent-metal, pressure bronze, shellstone, bone plates, volcanic glass, salvage plating, hard coral, stone, heavy tools, weapons, armor fittings, and structural components. This Skill replaces narrow surface-world smithing in Undine and expands it into the materials that matter beneath the sea. Shellhold makers, Arkborn salvage crews, Coral Court armorsmiths, and vent-field artisans all use versions of this craft. It is precise, physical, and unforgiving when the work must survive pressure.

- Forge, shape, carve, fit, or repair hard materials such as shellstone, bone plate, vent-metal, pressure bronze, or salvage metal
  +10 with a proper workshop; −20 in the field or with unstable heat
- Maintain weapons, armor plates, gate fittings, hinges, braces, clamps, and heavy tools
  +10 with familiar designs; −20 if the item is ancient, cracked, or made with unknown alloys
- Work volcanic glass, dense shell, coral cement plates, or old-world salvage into usable components
  +10 with proper cutting tools; −20 if the material is brittle, warped, or contaminated

- Identify structural weakness, hidden cracks, bad joins, or failing hard-material components
  +10 with inspection time; −20 in darkness, silt, or active collapse
- Modify armor, tools, or weapons for underwater use, pressure resistance, or Bloodtide body shape
  +10 with measurements and downtime; −20 if rushed or adapting gear across very different forms
- Salvage usable hard materials from ruins, wrecks, dead constructs, broken gates, or large creatures
  +10 with safe access; −20 if the source is unstable, guarded, or still alive in some important way

CRAFTING: LIVING MATERIALS (Intellect) — [Craft, Specialist]

Crafting: Living Materials covers kelpweave, treated hide, shell fiber, coral cement, living cord, soft reef materials, medicinal containers, beast tack, pressure cloth, mantle gear, and flexible organic equipment. It is used to create things that bend, breathe, grow, heal, or remain useful in moving water. Kelpway makers are famous for this craft, but the Coral Courts, Leviathan-Tide Peoples, and Shellholds all use it in their own ways. A poor living-material craftsperson makes gear that rots, tightens, bites, or grows at the wrong time.

- Weave, grow, stitch, cure, or repair kelpweave, living cord, treated hide, shell fiber, or pressure cloth
  +10 with healthy materials; −20 if the material is sick, dry, dead, or contaminated
- Craft harnesses, soft armor, skiff panels, saddle gear, mantle fittings, pouches, wraps, or flexible tools
  +10 with a known body shape or creature type; −20 if adapting for unusual anatomy or large beasts
- Maintain living tools, seed lamps, medicine beds, root shelters, and simple organic devices
  +10 with regular care; −20 if neglected, starved, poisoned, or exposed to arcane mutation
- Shape coral cement, soft reef growth, or semi-living structure materials for repair or construction
  +10 with compatible growth; −20 if the reef resists, is diseased, or belongs to someone else's warding
- Prepare containers, wrappings, or supports for herbs, venoms, living medicines, or fragile relics
  +10 with proper preparation; −20 if the contents are unstable, reactive, or poorly understood
- Recognize when living gear is failing, infected, stressed, or beginning to change
  +10 with touch and inspection; −20 if the change is subtle, magical, or deliberately hidden

CREATURE LORE (Intellect) — [Knowledge, Beasts]

Creature Lore covers knowledge of animals, monsters, arcane mutants, leviathan signs, predators, parasites, swarms, and unnatural beasts. It is not the same as Beast Handling. Beast Handling deals with living creatures in the

moment; Creature Lore tells the character what a thing is, what it wants, how it hunts, and why it should be avoided. In Undine, this Skill is vital because many creatures are shaped by depth, pressure, mutation, and region.

- Identify common beasts, predators, mounts, parasites, swarms, or monster signs
  +10 with a clear view or tracks; −20 if the creature is rare, young, mutated, or seen only in fragments
- Recall a creature's habits, diet, territory, mating season, weaknesses, or warning behavior
  +10 for local species; −20 for abyssal, mythic, or newly mutated creatures
- Recognize signs of arcane mutation, sickness, corruption, unnatural aggression, or changed migration
  +10 when the change is advanced; −20 if the creature is hiding symptoms or part of a larger pattern
- Know how to avoid, distract, repel, trap, or safely pass a creature
  +10 with preparation; −20 if surprised, lacking tools, or facing a group
- Interpret the behavior of large beasts, route creatures, leviathan attendants, or predator absence
  +10 with time to observe; −20 if panic, current, or magic has altered behavior
- Support hunting, tracking, Beast Handling, Survival, or Tactics involving specific creatures
  +10 when applying correct knowledge; −20 if relying on rumor or old stories

CURRENTCRAFT (Awareness) — [Movement, Survival, Water]

Currentcraft is the practical skill of reading and using water. It covers underwater movement, current sense, holding position, safe descent and ascent, route handling, three-dimensional maneuvering, and recognizing how water behaves around bodies, ruins, plants, beasts, and pressure changes. In Undine, Currentcraft replaces the need for a separate swimming skill. A character with Currentcraft does not merely move through water; they understand that the water is always moving too.

- Swim, maneuver, dive, rise, turn, or hold position in active underwater scenes
  +10 in calm water or familiar depth; −20 in violent current, silt, darkness, or while burdened
- Read current direction, drag, downpulls, upwells, eddies, and pressure shifts
  +10 with time to observe; −20 when the water is magically distorted, crowded, or full of debris
- Use current for speed, stealth, pursuit, escape, or positional advantage
  +10 when moving with the flow; −20 when fighting against it or misjudging the route
- Navigate three-dimensional movement during combat, chases, hazards, or exploration
  +10 with open water and clear sightlines; −20 in tight ruins, kelp tangles, swarms, or broken architecture
- Avoid being slammed into walls, dragged into chasms, swept through coral, or pulled below safe depth

+10 with warning signs; −20 if surprised or already off-balance

- Judge how a creature, vehicle, object, or body will move in nearby water
  +10 with familiar forms; −20 if the thing is huge, panicked, dead, or magically altered

DANGER SENSE (Awareness) — [Instinct, Perception]

Danger Sense is the ability to notice that something is wrong before the danger becomes obvious. It covers instinct, subtle signs, environmental unease, hostile intent, ambush cues, and the feeling that the water has changed. In Undine, danger may come from any direction. It may be above, below, hidden in silt, disguised as light, or waiting inside a beautiful ruin. Danger Sense does not explain the threat by itself, but it gives the Protagonist the chance to react before the worst moment arrives.

- Detect ambush signs, predator behavior, unnatural silence, or hostile movement
  +10 with calm observation; −20 in crowds, silt, bright distraction, or panic
- Notice subtle environmental changes such as pressure shifts, sudden stillness, light failure, or animal flight
  +10 in familiar terrain; −20 in unknown depth or magically distorted water
- Sense when a social situation is about to turn violent
  +10 when watching body language; −20 when distracted by ritual, etiquette, or unfamiliar customs
- React before a trap, collapsing ruin, opening gate, or sudden current hazard fully triggers
  +10 if the character was cautious; −20 if rushing, arguing, or focused elsewhere
- Recognize that a relic, growth, beast, or chamber is unsafe before touching it
  +10 with visible warning signs; −20 if the danger is sealed, dormant, or deliberately masked
- Avoid surprise when threats approach from above, below, or an unexpected Three-Plane Hex position
  +10 with clear water and space; −20 in darkness, tight terrain, or heavy sensory interference

DECEPTION (Presence) — [Social, Subterfuge]

Deception is the Skill of lying, concealment through words, false identity, misdirection, forgery of intent, and making others believe what benefits the character. In Undine, Deception is useful in Coral Court politics, smuggling routes, Arkborn record disputes, Shellhold inspections, Blackfin passage laws, and any scene where truth is dangerous. It does not always mean a direct lie. A pause, a title, a half-truth, or a carefully omitted fact can be enough to change the water.

- Tell a convincing lie, half-truth, cover story, or false explanation
  +10 when the lie is simple and supported by facts; −20 when complex, emotional, or easily checked
- Conceal motives during negotiation, courtly exchange, trade, or interrogation
  +10 with preparation; −20 against Insight, cultural familiarity, or known reputation
- Pose as a role, profession, house agent, guide, courier, pilgrim, scholar, or servant

+10 with proper clothing and details; −20 if questioned by someone from that culture

- Hide the true nature of relics, cargo, mutations, injuries, documents, or magical signs
  +10 with suitable containers or distractions; −20 if inspected by experts
- Mislead enemies during pursuit, route travel, or escape
  +10 with terrain knowledge; −20 if tracked by scent, blood, current disturbance, or magic
- Deflect blame, delay consequences, or redirect suspicion in a tense scene
  +10 if another plausible target exists; −20 if witnesses, records, or pearl memory contradict the story

DEEPWORKS (Intellect) — [Craft, Engineering, Specialist]

Deepworks is the specialized knowledge of underwater infrastructure and quasi-magical machinery. It covers pressure gates, brine pumps, current lifts, vent engines, sealed descent carriers, shell mechanisms, reef systems, air vault interfaces, and the built systems that keep settlements alive beneath the sea. Deepworks is not the same as Relic Lore. Deepworks concerns functioning systems in the present world, even when those systems include old parts. A character with Deepworks can understand why a gate is groaning, why a pump tastes wrong, or why a beautiful mechanism should not be trusted.

- Inspect, operate, or troubleshoot pressure gates, current locks, brine pumps, vent engines, or city systems
  +10 with access panels and records; −20 during active failure, sabotage, or unfamiliar design
- Identify whether a structure is safe, failing, overloaded, contaminated, or incorrectly repaired
  +10 with time and tools; −20 in darkness, silt, combat, or while the structure is moving

- Stabilize a Deepworks system long enough for escape, repair, evacuation, or further testing
  +10 with proper components; −20 if improvising with damaged parts or under pressure collapse
- Understand how living Reefwork, Shellhold engineering, Arkborn sealed systems, or

Kelpway organic craft interact with water flow
+10 with familiar tradition; −20 when several traditions are fused together

- Detect sabotage, hidden bypasses, false repairs, altered seals, or dangerous modifications
  +10 when the saboteur was rushed; −20 if the work was done by a master or hidden inside living material
- Use Deepworks knowledge to create Advantage during exploration, combat, or crisis
  +10 when exploiting known controls, vents, gates, locks, or flow systems; −20 if the system is ancient, unstable, or partly awake

DEPTH LORE (Intellect) — [Knowledge, Depth, Specialist]

Depth Lore is the study of the Drowned Realms as a vertical world. It covers Depth Bands, pressure regions, descent routes, known chasms, abyssal borders, native-depth customs, blackwater signs, and the dangers of traveling too far above or below one's accustomed waters. It is not the same as Survival. Survival helps a character endure the moment; Depth Lore helps them understand where they are, what rules govern that place, and what old warnings still matter there.

- Identify the likely hazards of a Depth Band, region, trench, shelf, or descent route
  +10 with maps, local testimony, or visible signs; −20 in unmapped waters, corrupted regions, or magically distorted depth
- Recall customs, taboos, route laws, pressure rites, or warning marks used by deepwater cultures
  +10 for known Bloodtide regions; −20 when dealing with hidden, extinct, or hostile groups
- Judge whether a route is safe for a traveler, beast, vehicle, or mixed-Bloodtide party
  +10 with current reports and proper preparation; −20 if the party includes unfamiliar physiology or damaged gear
- Recognize signs of dangerous descent, rapid ascent risk, pressure sickness, or depth mismatch
  +10 when observing early symptoms; −20 if the signs are masked by injury, mutation, or fear
- Identify major trenches, chasms, abyssal borders, gate routes, and old descent roads
  +10 with landmarks or guide marks; −20 in silt, darkness, or after geological change
- Interpret legends of the Black Reaches, Hadal Wounds, World-Eel routes, forbidden descents, or ancient deep powers
  +10 when comparing several traditions; −20 when the account is political, censored, or intentionally misleading

ESCAPE (Grace) — [Physical, Subterfuge]

Escape is the Skill of getting free from bonds, grips, nets, narrow spaces, cages, collapsed passages, snares, and bad positions. In the Drowned Realms, escape is often a matter of life and pressure. A character may need to slip free

before a current pulls them into a chasm, before a predator drags them below, or before a sealed chamber loses stability. Escape rewards calm hands, flexible movement, and the refusal to panic when the water closes in.

- Slip out of ropes, kelp bindings, cuffs, webbing, nets, or restraint harnesses
  +10 if the bindings are loose or improvised; −20 if expertly tied, barbed, living, or tightening
- Break free from a grapple, coil, tentacle, parasite hold, or dragging predator
  +10 if the character has leverage or a cutting tool; −20 if wounded, pinned, or pulled into open water
- Squeeze through narrow ruins, shell gaps, root tunnels, collapsed doors, or tight current channels
  +10 with time and no burden; −20 while armored, panicked, pursued, or carrying gear
- Escape a locked chamber, cage, holding cell, or sealed compartment through physical effort and timing
  +10 if the structure is damaged; −20 if pressure-sealed, watched, or designed to resist escape
- Shed tangled gear, snagged packs, caught weapons, or trapped armor before it becomes fatal
  +10 with practiced release points; −20 in darkness, silt, or violent current
- Turn a failed escape into a partial advantage, such as freeing one hand, creating space, or shifting position
  +10 if the character accepts a cost; −20 if the restraint allows no movement at all

FORAGE (Awareness) — [Survival, Food]

Forage is the Skill of finding usable food, water-safe growths, edible sea life, fuel substitutes, simple medicines, and useful natural materials. In Undine, foraging is not only gathering berries from a surface forest. It means knowing which kelp can be eaten, which shellfish carry toxins, which fungus grows near safe caverns, and which bright thing should never be touched. Kelpway travelers, Shellhold scouts, healers, beast-handlers, and route crews all rely on this Skill. A good forager keeps a party fed; a bad one feeds the party to something else.

- Find edible kelp, fungus, shellfish, small fish, eggs, root growths, or safe scavenged food
  +10 in familiar waters and healthy ecology; −20 in poisoned, overharvested, or corrupted regions
- Identify toxic, spoiled, diseased, parasitic, or mutation-touched food sources
  +10 with time to inspect; −20 if hungry, rushed, or dealing with unfamiliar species
- Gather simple medicinal growths, binding fibers, edible oils, lamp gels, or useful natural materials
  +10 in rich greenwater or known beds; −20 in barren stone, blackwater, or sterile ruins
- Preserve gathered food for travel, trade, or emergency stores
  +10 with salt, resin, sealed containers, or proper drying chambers; −20 in poor conditions or with fragile food
- Locate feeding signs that suggest nearby predators, beasts, swarms, or dangerous territory

+10 when the area is undisturbed; −20 after storms, heavy traffic, or siltfall

- Feed a group, beast, or expedition from local resources without stripping a route bare
  +10 with careful harvesting; −20 if the group is large, desperate, or culturally restricted from taking certain foods

FORMAL MAGIC (Intellect) — [Arcane, Magic, Specialist]

Formal Magic is structured, taught, recorded, bounded, and witnessed magic. It is the magic of Tide Magisters, Arkborn relic-workers, Shellhold ward specialists, court ritualists, and disciplined deepwater traditions. A Formal Magic caster learns procedures, gestures, formulae, limits, and consequences. This Skill does not represent every kind of spell in Undine; it represents magic that has been shaped into law, method, archive, or school.

- Cast action-based spells from formal schools such as Current Law, Pressurecraft, Reefwork, Pearl Divination, Relic Sorcery, or certain Abyssal Rites
  +10 with proper focus and calm conditions; −20 while wounded, rushed, distracted, or outside the spell's proper environment
- Perform formal rituals, wards, bindings, divinations, gate rites, oath workings, or controlled magical procedures
  +10 with time, tools, and correct materials; −20 if interrupted, improvised, or missing key components
- Counter, stabilize, interrupt, or analyze a formal magical effect
  +10 when the school is familiar; −20 if the magic is ancient, corrupted, wild, or from an unknown tradition
- Use magic to influence structures, currents, seals, memories, pressure fields, or relic interfaces
  +10 with access to the proper target; −20 if the target is damaged, resistant, or actively hostile
- Maintain magical focus during a Contest, ritual, or dangerous scene
  +10 with Concentration support or a stable casting space; −20 during combat, pressure failure, or arcane backlash
- Recognize when a formal working is unsafe, incomplete, false, or built on a dangerous assumption
  +10 with notes or visible structure; −20 if the danger is hidden inside beautiful form, old law, or trusted tradition

HERBALISM (Intellect) — [Medicine, Nature]

Herbalism covers the preparation and use of natural remedies, kelp medicines, fungal treatments, poultices, salves, bitter roots, toxin binders, growth pastes, and restorative plantcraft. It is close to Medicine but not the same. Medicine treats the body directly; Herbalism prepares the substances that aid healing, resist poison, calm fever, or slow infection. Kelpway Green-Tide Healers are famous for this Skill, but every Bloodtide has some form of practical remedy work.

- Identify useful herbs, kelp, fungi, spores, roots, medicinal nodules, or healing growths
  +10 in familiar waters; −20 if the growth is rare, disguised, tainted, or out of season

- Prepare poultices, salves, antidotes, fever reducers, calming draughts, or wound washes
  +10 with proper tools and fresh ingredients; −20 in the field, under stress, or with poor materials
- Treat venom, minor sickness, brine irritation, coral rash, parasite bites, or early infection
  +10 when used with Medicine; −20 if symptoms are advanced, magical, or misdiagnosed

- Preserve or transport delicate living ingredients without killing or corrupting them
  +10 with correct containers; −20 through hostile pressure, heat, dryness, or contaminated water
- Recognize dangerous plantlike growths, false remedies, toxic spores, or hungry living medicine
  +10 with close inspection; −20 if the growth is magically altered or intentionally cultivated as a trap
- Support recovery during rest by improving food, sleep, wound treatment, or immune response
  +10 in a safe camp or healing chamber; −20 in poor water, unstable shelter, or ongoing exposure

INSIGHT (Awareness) — [Social, Perception]

Insight is the Skill of reading people. It covers motives, fear, sincerity, hidden anger, grief, deception, hesitation, and the social meaning beneath words. In Undine, body language varies widely between Bloodtides, so Insight often requires cultural sensitivity. A Coral Court pause may be insult. A Gloam-Eyed silence may be respect. A Shellborn blunt answer may be trust rather than rudeness. Insight helps the Protagonist notice what is being felt before it becomes action.

- Read whether someone is lying, afraid, ashamed, angry, pressured, or withholding information
  +10 with time and familiarity; −20 across unfamiliar Bloodtides or ritual settings
- Sense the true mood of a negotiation, court scene, crew, settlement, or tense gathering
  +10 when observing freely; −20 if

distracted, unwelcome, or misreading cultural norms

- Notice when an ally is hiding injury, mutation signs, fear, or divided loyalty
  +10 with close relationship; −20 if the target is trained, proud, or magically shielded
- Understand the emotional weight of a gesture, silence, offering, refusal, or title
  +10 in familiar culture; −20 if the custom is foreign or deliberately ambiguous
- Detect manipulation, coercion, panic, grief, or cult influence in a person's behavior
  +10 with repeated interaction; −20 if the influence is subtle, magical, or socially accepted
- Support a social approach by choosing the right tone, timing, or pressure point
  +10 when paired with Persuasion, Bargain, or Intimidation; −20 if the read is rushed or based on prejudice

INTIMIDATION (Presence) — [Social, Fear]

Intimidation is the Skill of applying fear, pressure, threat, authority, reputation, or physical presence to force compliance. It may be loud, quiet, formal, or brutally direct. In the Drowned Realms, intimidation can come from a Shellborn blocking a gate, a Reef Duelist naming a legal challenge, a Blackfin hunter showing a blood-token, or an Arkborn Warden placing a hand on a sealed door. It is not the same as cruelty, though cruel people often use it.

- Force a weaker, frightened, guilty, or uncertain target to back down
  +10 with obvious leverage; −20 if the target has strong allies, faith, or nothing to lose
- Use reputation, title, armor, weaponry, Bloodtide status, or public authority to command attention
  +10 when the authority is recognized; −20 when the audience rejects or mocks it
- Threaten violence, exposure, legal action, route denial, gate closure, or social ruin
  +10 when the threat is credible; −20 if it is excessive, unbelievable, or culturally meaningless
- Break the nerve of guards, smugglers, raiders, cultists, or corrupt officials
  +10 with evidence or superior position; −20 against fanatics, veterans, or magically influenced targets
- Protect another person by making yourself the obvious danger
  +10 with physical presence or strong reputation; −20 if outnumbered, wounded, or visibly uncertain
- Win a Contest of will through silence, stare, stance, or controlled menace
  +10 when the target understands the signal; −20 across cultures that read the signal differently

INVESTIGATION (Intellect) — [Perception, Reasoning]

Investigation is the Skill of finding, linking, and interpreting clues. It covers searching rooms, reconstructing events, studying evidence, comparing stories, detecting inconsistencies, and drawing practical conclusions. In Undine, investigation may involve silt patterns, broken coral, pearl records, pressure damage, blood in

water, growth behavior, strange light, or relic residue. It is the Skill for asking what happened here and refusing the first easy answer.

- Search a room, ruin, body, vehicle, reef chamber, or crime scene for clues
  +10 with time and good light; −20 in silt, darkness, collapse, or contaminated water
- Reconstruct events from physical evidence such as damage, blood, tracks, broken tools, or current disturbance
  +10 when the scene is fresh; −20 after scavengers, current shift, or deliberate cleanup
- Compare testimony, records, maps, memories, or witness pearls for contradictions
  +10 with access to several sources; −20 if the sources are partial, biased, or magically altered
- Identify the likely cause of structural failure, sabotage, attack, poisoning, disappearance, or mutation outbreak
  +10 with relevant specialist support; −20 if the evidence crosses several fields
- Notice hidden compartments, false walls, concealed routes, disguised cargo, or planted evidence
  +10 with careful search; −20 if crafted by experts or hidden inside living material
- Turn a clue into a useful lead, suspect, route, question, or next step
  +10 when the pattern is clear; −20 when the clue is ancient, symbolic, or intentionally misleading

LOCKPICKING (Grace) — [Subterfuge, Technical]

Lockpicking covers opening locks, latches, sealed containers, mechanical fasteners, small pressure clasps, chained restraints, and delicate closures without the proper key. It is a practical Skill for smugglers, ruin-breakers, thieves, scouts, and anyone who spends time near doors that were not opened for them. In Undine, locks may be made from shell, bone, metal, coral, old-world ceramic, or living material. Some are simple. Some are part of systems that punish curiosity.

- Open mundane locks, latches, clasps, chains, shackles, cases, or sealed containers
  +10 with proper tools and time; −20 if rushed, watched, corroded, or working in darkness

- Bypass small pressure locks, water-sealed clasps, shell mechanisms, or hidden catches
  +10 if the design is familiar; −20 if old, foreign, or damaged by pressure
- Open a lock without leaving obvious signs of tampering
  +10 with fine tools; −20 if the lock is brittle, living, or under tension
- Disable a locking mechanism long enough for escape or entry
  +10 with access to the working parts; −20 if the lock is built into a larger Deepworks system
- Recognize traps, alarms, poisons, or magical marks attached to a lock
  +10 when inspecting carefully; −20 when the trap is hidden in the keyway, seal, or living growth
- Improvise tools from bone, wire, shell splinters, salvage, or personal gear
  +10 with suitable materials; −20 if the lock is precise, ancient, or pressure-sensitive

MEDICINE (Intellect) — [Healing, Science]

Medicine is the Skill of treating bodies. It covers first aid, wound care, surgery, stabilization, pressure trauma, venom treatment, sickness, infection, parasite removal, and recovery. In Undine, Medicine is essential because injuries do not happen in clean rooms. Wounds fill with salt, venom, silt, coral fragments, or arcane residue. Medicine is not magical healing, but without it many characters do not live long enough for magic to matter.

- Stabilize a wounded character and prevent a Wound from worsening
  +10 with tools and clean water; −20 in combat, contamination, pressure failure, or poor light
- Treat Light, Moderate, or Severe Wounds during rest and recovery
  +10 with proper supplies and shelter; −20 without tools, time, or safe conditions
- Diagnose pressure trauma, brine sickness, venom, infection, parasite exposure, or coral injury
  +10 with clear symptoms; −20 if symptoms overlap with mutation or magic
- Remove parasites, barbs, coral shards, broken shell, glass, or foreign growth from the body
  +10 with assistance and stable conditions; −20 if the object is deep, living, poisonous, or near vital organs
- Support recovery with bandaging, splints, surgical work, rest planning, and infection control
  +10 when combined with Herbalism or Alchemy; −20 if the patient continues traveling or fighting
- Determine when magical healing, Wild Magic, or advanced treatment is needed
  +10 with observation time; −20 if the patient hides symptoms or cultural taboos interfere

MIMICRY (Presence) — [Performance, Subterfuge]

Mimicry is the Skill of copying voices, gestures, calls, accents, animal sounds, route signals, and cultural patterns of speech or movement. It can be used for performance, deception, hunting, signaling, or infiltration. In Undine, Mimicry may

also involve imitating aquatic creature calls, Shellhold work signals, Coral Court formal phrasing, Kelpway route marks, or the tone of a known official. A good mimic does more than repeat a sound; they understand what the sound means.

- Imitate a person's voice, accent, formal address, or speaking rhythm
  +10 after close observation; −20 if the voice is unfamiliar, foreign, or magically altered
- Copy cultural gestures, work calls, route signals, house forms, or ceremonial responses
  +10 when the culture is familiar; −20 if the gesture has hidden rank, oath, or taboo meaning
- Mimic animal calls, warning cries, mating sounds, distress signals, or predator noises
  +10 with known species; −20 if the creature is rare, intelligent, or arcane-mutated
- Use mimicry to distract, mislead, lure, or frighten a target
  +10 with proper cover and timing; −20 if the target can see clearly or knows the original source
- Support Deception, Stealth, Hunting, or Beast Handling through convincing sound or behavior
  +10 when the mimicry fits the scene; −20 if overused or culturally inappropriate
- Recognize when someone else is using mimicry, false signals, copied calls, or forged speech patterns
  +10 with familiarity; −20 when the mimic is skilled or using magical support

ORATORY (Presence) — [Social, Performance]

Oratory is the skill of speaking to groups with authority, clarity, and force. It is used to inspire crews, sway assemblies, calm frightened settlements, argue before courts, rally defenders, make formal declarations, and shape public opinion. In the Drowned Realms, Oratory may take the form of Coral Court speeches, Shellhold command calls, Kelpway route councils, Arkborn lectures, Abyssal ritual declarations, or Leviathan-Tide proclamations carried across open water.

• Address a crowd, council, court, clan gathering, crew, or settlement
• +10 with a sympathetic audience; −20 if the audience is hostile, frightened, distracted, or divided

• Rally allies before danger, battle, travel, or desperate labor
• +10 if the speaker has proven courage or authority; −20 if morale is already broken or the danger is visibly overwhelming

• Calm panic during disaster, attack, pressure failure, Redbloom exposure, or gate collapse
• +10 with clear instructions and visible leadership; −20 if people are wounded, trapped, or already fleeing

• Argue a formal case before Coral Court officials, Shellhold elders, Arkborn wardens, clan speakers, or other authorities
• +10 with evidence, witnesses, or proper etiquette; −20 if the speaker lacks status, violates custom, or challenges powerful interests

• Publicly shame, challenge, accuse, or expose someone
• +10 with proof or strong social support; −20 if the target has higher station, loyal defenders, or control of the setting

• Inspire a Companion, crew, escort, or settlement group to endure hardship
• +10 when the speech appeals to shared duty or survival; −20 if the group believes the speaker is asking too much

• Deliver ritual words, oath declarations, legal statements, funeral speeches, victory addresses, or formal introductions
• +10 with preparation and correct tradition; −20 if the speaker uses the wrong Bloodtide custom or insults local memory

• Win time through speech while others work, escape, prepare magic, repair a mechanism, or treat the wounded
• +10 if the audience wants to listen; −20 if enemies are already committed to violence

• Counter fear, rumor, propaganda, factional agitation, or public despair
• +10 with trusted witnesses or visible evidence; −20 if the opposing claim has already spread widely

• Make a lasting impression on a faction, patron, court, clan, or settlement
• +10 after a successful deed; −20 if the speaker is unknown, disgraced, or associated with an enemy faction

I do not have the earlier exact text available to verify a word-for-word reproduction, but here is a regenerated **Performance** entry in the same Undine skill format.

PERFORMANCE (Presence) — [Social, Art]

Performance is the skill of entertaining, impressing, distracting, or moving an audience through practiced art. It covers music, dance, recitation, masked display, ritual movement, dramatic storytelling, comic diversion, formal court entertainment, and public spectacle. In the Drowned Realms, Performance may be shaped by drifting kelp ribbons, shell instruments, pressure-drum rhythms, pearl-mask drama, lightfish displays, current-dance, memory recitation, or the slow ceremonial movement of a Bloodtide tradition.

• Entertain a crowd, court, crew, clan gathering, market, feast, or settlement
• +10 with a friendly audience; −20 if the audience is hostile, grieving, frightened, or distracted by danger

• Earn money, shelter, food, favors, or introductions through public performance
• +10 in a place that values the performer's tradition; −20 where outsiders, unknown artists, or low-status performers are distrusted

• Distract guards, officials, beasts, crowds, or suspicious observers
• +10 if the performance is expected or welcome; −20 if the audience is alert, disciplined, or already suspicious

• Support a disguise, false identity, ceremonial role, or social deception
• +10 with proper costume, ritual knowledge, or local custom; −20 if the performer does not know the audience's traditions

• Perform formal art before Coral Court patrons, Arkborn scholars, Kelpway elders, Shellhold commanders, Abyssal witnesses, or Leviathan-Tide route camps
• +10 with correct etiquette and preparation; −20 if the performance violates local custom, rank, taboo, or memory

• Calm fear, grief, anger, or despair through music, story, movement, or recitation
• +10 after a shared victory or during safe rest;

−20 during active danger, pressure failure, attack, or Redbloom panic

• Preserve or transmit history, genealogy, warnings, route memory, or clan law through artistic tradition
• +10 with time to prepare; −20 if the material is archaic, politically dangerous, or contested by witnesses

• Draw attention away from an ally's action, escape, spellcasting, treatment, theft, or repair work
• +10 in a noisy or crowded scene; −20 in a quiet, formal, or closely watched setting

• Impress a patron, faction, rival, or potential ally
• +10 with a rare style, beautiful materials, or strong reputation; −20 if the target considers performance frivolous, improper, or manipulative

• Recognize the meaning of another performer's technique, symbolic gesture, rhythm, mask, or movement pattern
• +10 if the tradition is familiar; −20 if the performance belongs to a distant Bloodtide, hidden cult, old-world ritual, or coded faction language

PERSUASION (Presence) — [Social]

Persuasion is the Skill of changing minds through reason, appeal, sincerity, charm, trust, and emotional connection. It is more personal than Oratory and less transactional than Bargain. In the Drowned Realms, Persuasion can convince a guide to help, calm a suspicious guard, soften a rival, win an ally, or keep a frightened witness from fleeing. It works best when the speaker offers something the target can believe.

- Convince a person to help, listen, wait, forgive, reconsider, or reveal something
  +10 with trust, shared values, or honest stakes; −20 after betrayal, insult, or fear
- Calm anger, grief, suspicion, or panic in a personal conversation
  +10 with time and empathy; −20 if the target is in immediate danger or public shame
- Appeal to duty, honor, survival, friendship, faith, love, or practical need
  +10 when the appeal is genuine and relevant; −20 if it sounds false or manipulative
- Negotiate informally without invoking price, contract, or formal bargain
  +10 with a reasonable request; −20 if asking for risk, sacrifice, or secret-breaking
- Build rapport across Bloodtide boundaries, social ranks, or faction lines
  +10 with respect for customs; −20 if prejudice or history stands in the way
- Turn a hostile first impression into a chance for further conversation
  +10 if no blood has been spilled; −20 if the target has reason to see the character as a threat

POLEARMS (Might) — [Combat, Weapon]

Polearms covers spears, tridents, harpoons, long hooks, boarding lances, thrusting poles, eel-prongs, and other reach weapons. It is one of the most important weapon Skills in Undine because thrusting weapons work well underwater. Polearms keep predators at distance, control approaches, and allow attacks from relative safety. Shellguards, Harpoon Champions,

Kelpstalkers, and route escorts often rely on this Skill.

- Attack with spears, tridents, harpoons, hooks, lances, or long thrusting weapons
  +10 with room to set the weapon; −20 in cramped ruins, kelp tangles, or close grapples
- Keep an enemy, predator, or many-limbed creature at reach
  +10 against charging or approaching foes; −20 against fast flanking attackers or swarms
- Use a harpoon, barbed spear, or hook to pin, drag, anchor, or redirect a target
  +10 with line support or bracing; −20 if the target is huge, slippery, or moving with strong current
- Fight from behind a shield line, gate defense, skiff edge, beast harness, or formation
  +10 with allies and clear roles; −20 if the formation breaks
- Strike at enemies above, below, or across Three-Plane Hex positions
  +10 when the angle is clear; −20 through silt, debris, or intervening bodies
- Use polearms as tools for probing ruins, testing silt, moving objects, or keeping distance from hazards
  +10 when cautious; −20 if the hazard reacts, grips, or pulls

RELIC LORE (Intellect) — [Knowledge, Ancient, Specialist]

Relic Lore is the study of pre-Deluge artifacts, old-world ruins, sealed systems, ancient inscriptions, dead languages, broken devices, and the material remains of the world that drowned. It replaces broad ancient lore in Undine. Arkborn Relic Scholars are the most famous practitioners, but Shellhold Ruin-Breakers, Coral Court historians, and deep explorers also value it. Relic Lore does not make old things safe; it helps the character understand why they are dangerous.

- Identify pre-Deluge artifacts, old-world materials, relic functions, inscriptions, or warning marks
  +10 with clear markings or Arkborn

records; −20 if damaged, incomplete, or deliberately erased

- Interpret sealed doors, vault signs, chamber labels, old maps, pressure diagrams, or ruin symbols
  +10 when the language or system is known; −20 when corrupted, partial, or written in a dead technical form
- Recall the history, purpose, or likely danger of a ruin, device, relic site, or old-world faction
  +10 with records and time; −20 when the site is mythic, censored, or politically distorted
- Recognize relics that should not be touched, moved, opened, activated, or exposed to water
  +10 with visible warning signs; −20 if the relic appears harmless or beautiful
- Support Deepworks, Investigation, Lockpicking, Formal Magic, or Scholar when dealing with old systems
  +10 when the link is clear; −20 if the relic blends several lost technologies or magical traditions
- Determine what kind of specialist, ritual, tool, or environment is needed to handle a relic safely
  +10 with time to study; −20 during collapse, combat, or active magical response

RIDING (Grace) — [Movement, Animal]

Riding covers mounted travel and control of trained creatures used as mounts. In Undine, this includes ray mounts, eel-runners, shellbeasts, swift fish, current-haulers, and other sea creatures large enough to carry or pull a rider. It also covers balance, signaling, mounting, dismounting, and fighting from a trained mount. Riding does not replace Beast Handling. Beast Handling trains and calms the animal; Riding keeps the rider in control when motion becomes dangerous.

- Ride a trained aquatic mount through calm or moderate water
  +10 with a familiar mount and proper tack; −20 if injured, burdened, or in unfamiliar depth
- Maneuver a mount during combat, chase, pursuit, escape, or rough current
  +10 in open water; −20 in tight ruins, kelp tangles, silt, or violent flow
- Mount, dismount, recover balance, or avoid being thrown

+10 when prepared; −20 if the mount panics, dives, rolls, or is wounded

- Fight from a mount using weapons, lines, shields, or thrown attacks
  +10 with training and suitable gear; −20 if the mount is uncontrolled or the weapon has bad drag
- Guide a mount through hazards such as reefs, chasms, predator fields, pressure shelves, or gates
  +10 with route knowledge; −20 if the mount resists or senses danger before the rider
- Push a mount for speed, endurance, or emergency escape without harming it
  +10 with a strong bond; −20 if the creature is tired, hungry, sick, or poorly treated

SCHOLAR (Intellect) — [Knowledge, Academic]

Scholar is the Skill of study, records, writing, mathematics, legal texts, history, languages, theory, classification, and disciplined learning. It is broader than Relic Lore or Arcane Lore. Scholar helps a character research, compare sources, understand institutions, and work through complex written or recorded material. In Undine, scholars may study Bloodtide histories, pressure law, old treaties, natural philosophy, languages, genealogy, medicine, or the politics of memory.

- Research a subject through records, archives, ledgers, witness pearls, legal walls, or oral accounts
  +10 with access and time; −20 if records are restricted, damaged, censored, or contradictory
- Understand formal systems such as law, genealogy, mathematics, calendars, trade codes, or civic records
  +10 in familiar institutions; −20 when dealing with foreign, ancient, or deliberately obscure systems
- Translate, compare, or interpret texts, inscriptions, records, diagrams, or old terminology
  +10 with known language families; −20 if the text is fragmentary, coded, or pre-Deluge
- Build a reasoned argument from evidence, precedent, records, or theory
  +10 with strong sources; −20 if the evidence is incomplete or politically dangerous
- Identify scholarly errors, forged records, bad citations, false histories, or impossible claims
  +10 with proper references; −20 if the forgery is expert or supported by powerful interests
- Support other Lore Skills by organizing research and finding relevant sources
  +10 with good libraries or archives; −20 in field conditions or hostile settlements

SHIELDS (Might) — [Combat, Defense]

Shields covers the use of hand shields, shell shields, gate shields, bucklers, tower plates, and defensive barriers carried by the character. In Undine, shields are not always broad flat boards. They may be shell plates, reinforced hide frames, coral-rimmed guards, bone shields, or heavy Shellhold gate shields. Shields are useful for blocking attacks, protecting allies, bracing against current, and controlling narrow passages. They are less useful when a character cannot maneuver or is attacked from several planes at once.

- Block, deflect, or absorb attacks with a shield
  +10 against direct melee attacks; −20 against attacks from above, below, or multiple directions
- Protect another character, wounded ally, caster, worker, or civilian
  +10 when positioned well; −20 in open water, strong current, or chaotic movement
- Brace against impact, forced movement, predator charge, debris, or pressure surge
  +10 with solid footing or a wall; −20 while floating or off-balance
- Fight in formation, gate defense, corridor defense, or escort duty
  +10 with trained allies; −20 if the line breaks or visibility fails
- Use a shield to cover retreat, close distance, or force passage through danger
  +10 against missiles, small creatures, or debris; −20 against large crushing attacks or swarms
- Improvise cover from shell plates, wreckage, hard coral, salvage panels, or large gear
  +10 with suitable material; −20 if the object is fragile, awkward, or dragging the character down

SLEIGHT OF HAND (Grace) — [Subterfuge, Manual]

Sleight of Hand covers quick fingers, hidden movement, palming, swapping, cutting purses, planting items, concealing small tools, and delicate manipulation under observation. It is useful in markets, courts, smuggling dens, Arkborn archives, and anywhere a small object matters more than a large speech. Underwater, Sleight of Hand also requires control over drift. A careless thief leaves bubbles, disturbed silt, or a floating clue.

- Palm, conceal, swap, or steal small objects such as pearls, keys, vials, charms, tokens, or documents
  +10 in distraction or crowding; −20 if the object is tethered, watched, or buoyant
- Plant evidence, tracking marks, small relics, poison, or messages on a target or location
  +10 with cover; −20 if the target is alert or wearing tight gear
- Perform delicate hand work while being watched, such as false gestures, hidden signals, or secret exchanges
  +10 with practiced routine; −20 against trained observers or Insight
- Cut purses, cords, straps, bindings, seals, or tied containers without notice
  +10 with a sharp small blade; −20 if the target is moving quickly or the material is tough
- Conceal tools, blades, lockpicks, vials, or contraband on the body
  +10 with prepared clothing or body shape; −20 during careful search or unfamiliar anatomy
- Recover from a failed attempt by turning it into a harmless gesture or accident
  +10 if the scene allows embarrassment; −20 if the failure exposes a crime or forbidden object

SMUGGLING (Intellect) — [Subterfuge, Trade]

Smuggling is the Skill of moving goods, people, messages, relics, contraband, or secrets through controlled routes. It covers hidden compartments, false manifests, bribes, route timing, customs evasion, black-market contacts, and knowing what authorities actually inspect. In Undine, smugglers deal in pearls, weapons, relic fragments, medicine, forbidden growths, old records, strange eggs, pressure keys, and people who need to disappear. Smuggling is not simply stealth; it is logistics with consequences.

- Hide contraband in cargo, clothing, vehicles, beasts, living gear, or false compartments
  +10 with preparation; −20 against expert inspection or Deepworks scanning
- Move goods or people through gates, markets, court districts, patrol routes, or controlled channels
  +10 with known routes and contacts; −20 during lockdown, crisis, or political tension
- Prepare false manifests, trade stories, cover cargo, or plausible explanations
  +10 with proper documents; −20 if dealing with Arkborn records, Shellhold ledgers, or suspicious officials
- Know black-market contacts, corrupt inspectors, hidden routes, or quiet exchanges
  +10 in familiar settlements; −20 in hostile or unfamiliar waters
- Judge whether a cargo is too dangerous, cursed, unstable, watched, or likely to attract predators
  +10 with inspection and rumor; −20 if the seller hides the truth or the cargo is sealed
- Escape blame when contraband is discovered
  +10 with prepared scapegoats or legal ambiguity; −20 if caught holding the item or betraying a known trust

STEALTH (Grace) — [Subterfuge, Movement]

Stealth is the Skill of moving unseen, unheard, unnoticed, or unrecognized. In Undine, stealth is shaped by light, silt, current, bubbles, body shape, bioluminescence, and three-dimensional space. A hidden character may be above, below, behind coral, inside kelp, under silt, or drifting with a school of fish. Stealth is not only silence; it is leaving the water undisturbed.

- Move quietly and unseen through reefs, ruins, kelp forests, markets, tunnels, or

open water
+10 with cover and slow movement; −20 in bright water, open space, or strong current

- Hide among silt, vegetation, coral, wreckage, crowds, shadows, or light distortion
  +10 when the environment fits the character's body; −20 if coloration, glow, size, or gear stands out
- Approach a target without alerting them
  +10 from behind, below, or with current cover; −20 if the target has strong senses or Danger Sense
- Avoid patrols, predators, guards, route watchers, or settlement lookouts
  +10 with route knowledge; −20 in restricted areas or culturally unfamiliar spaces
- Conceal signs of passage such as disturbed silt, broken growth, bubbles, scent, or drifting fibers
  +10 with time to clean up; −20 while moving quickly or bleeding
- Use vertical space to hide, stalk, or reposition on the Three-Plane Hex
  +10 with darkness or clutter; −20 when the water is clear and watched from multiple angles

STREETWISE (Awareness) — [Social, Urban]

Streetwise is the Skill of understanding informal power, local rumors, criminal networks, market habits, settlement mood, dangerous neighborhoods, and who really controls a place. It applies in cities, ports, gate markets, reef districts, Shellhold work halls, Arkborn public levels, and traveling route gatherings. Streetwise is not formal knowledge. It is practical sense for places where people lie, trade, gossip, cheat, warn, and survive.

- Find rumors, gossip, hidden tensions, local scandals, or recent trouble
  +10 with time and small spending; −20 if the community is closed or afraid
- Identify local gangs, smugglers, corrupt officials, faction agents, debt collectors, or dangerous patrons
  +10 in familiar settlements; −20 in foreign cultures or elite districts
- Locate black markets, cheap lodging, quiet healers, illegal guides, false papers, or forbidden goods
  +10 with existing contacts; −20 during crackdowns or after recent violence
- Read the mood of a market, gate, tavern, dock, court edge, or worker district
  +10 when blending in; −20 when obviously foreign, rich, armed, or watched
- Avoid scams, ambushes, bad deals, informants, and local traps
  +10 with caution; −20 if rushed, desperate, or visibly ignorant
- Use common talk, slang, bribes, favors, or reputation to get information without formal channels
  +10 with shared culture; −20 if the character insults local custom or asks too directly

SURVIVAL (Resolve) — [Survival, Endurance]

Survival is the Skill of enduring hostile environments, managing supplies, finding shelter, avoiding exposure, making camp, recognizing

natural hazards, and staying alive when civilization is absent. It overlaps with Forage, Currentcraft, and Depth Lore, but its focus is practical endurance. In Undine, Survival may involve pressure stress, cold, silt storms, dangerous reefs, toxic water, predator country, and long travel through unsafe regions. It is the Skill for lasting one more day.

- Find or create shelter in reefs, kelp beds, ruins, caves, wrecks, or open-water camps
  +10 with useful terrain; −20 in barren, toxic, or unstable regions
- Manage food, rest, warmth, light, breathable conditions, and safe water over a journey
  +10 with proper supplies; −20 after loss, theft, spoilage, or contamination
- Avoid environmental hazards such as cold, bad water, predators, siltfall, coral cuts, or pressure strain
  +10 with warning signs; −20 when lost, injured, or out of native depth
- Build a temporary camp, emergency shelter, signal point, or safe rest site
  +10 with time and materials; −20 in hostile current, open water, or active pursuit
- Endure hardship without losing function, morale, or judgment
  +10 with rest cycles and discipline; −20 under hunger, exhaustion, fear, or worsening wounds
- Support a group's survival during travel, crisis, isolation, or route failure
  +10 with cooperative companions; −20 with panic, mixed needs, or scarce resources

TACTICS (Intellect) — [Combat, Strategy]

Tactics is the Skill of planning fights, reading battlefield conditions, using terrain, coordinating allies, anticipating enemy action, and making violence more efficient. It applies to duels, ambushes, gate defense, convoy protection, monster hunts, open-water battles, and ruin skirmishes. In Undine, tactics must account for three-dimensional movement, current, light, pressure, and creatures that do not fight like people. A good tactician knows where the danger will be a moment before it arrives.

- Assess an enemy's position, likely plan, strength, weakness, or escape route
  +10 with observation time; −20 if the foe is unfamiliar, hidden, or acting strangely
- Use terrain, current, light, depth, gates, cover, or the Three-Plane Hex to gain advantage
  +10 with preparation; −20 in chaotic, shifting, or unknown environments
- Coordinate allies, guards, crews, companions, or civilians during combat or crisis
  +10 with trained allies; −20 with frightened, wounded, or culturally mixed groups
- Plan an ambush, defense, withdrawal, rescue, breach, hunt, or escort action
  +10 with maps and scouting; −20 when rushed or acting on bad information
- Recognize when a fight is unwinnable and identify the best retreat, delay, or sacrifice
  +10 with clear objectives; −20 when pride, panic, or duty clouds judgment

- Exploit creature behavior, enemy habits, formation flaws, or environmental hazards
  +10 when supported by Creature Lore or Depth Lore; −20 against mindless, ancient, or unpredictable foes

THROWN WEAPONS (Grace) — [Combat, Weapon]

Thrown Weapons covers knives, darts, javelins, small harpoons, weighted shells, throwing hooks, toxin spikes, and other weapons hurled by hand. Underwater throwing is difficult. Drag, current, range, and weapon shape all matter. For this reason, thrown weapons in Undine are often short-range, weighted, barbed, or designed for water use. A skilled thrower knows when a throw is possible and when it is just littering.

- Attack with throwing knives, darts, javelins, small harpoons, hooks, or weighted weapons
  +10 at close range or with water-shaped weapons; −20 at long range, against current, or in silt
- Throw a line, hook, marker, tool, or rescue weight to a target or location
  +10 with calm water; −20 in violent current, darkness, or panic
- Use poisoned darts, barbed points, glass spikes, or alchemical capsules
  +10 with prepared ammunition; −20 if the payload is fragile or the water disperses it
- Strike exposed weak points, soft tissue, lamps, cords, bindings, or small targets
  +10 with a clear shot; −20 against moving targets or heavy armor
- Throw from concealment, above, below, or while drifting with current
  +10 with surprise; −20 if unstable or off-balance
- Judge whether a thrown weapon will carry properly in the current
  +10 with Currentcraft support; −20 in strange, magical, or shifting water

TRACKING (Awareness) — [Survival, Perception]

Tracking is the Skill of following signs left by people, beasts, vehicles, wounded prey, swarms, or moving objects. In the Drowned Realms, tracks are rarely footprints alone. A tracker reads disturbed silt, broken kelp, blood in water, frightened animals, scraped coral, scent trails, displaced shells, current drift, and pressure marks. Tracking is the art of finding what tried to leave no path.

- Follow a person, beast, vehicle, or group through reefs, silt, kelp, ruins, or open water
  +10 with fresh signs; −20 after current shift, siltfall, heavy traffic, or deliberate concealment
- Track blood, injury signs, broken gear, disturbed growth, or dragged bodies
  +10 when the target is wounded or burdened; −20 if predators, scavengers, or magic interfere
- Identify what kind of creature or group left a trail
  +10 with clear marks; −20 if the trail is partial, old, or made by an unfamiliar body type
- Follow a trail through three-dimensional space, including upward, downward, and indirect movement
  +10 with Currentcraft support; −20 in open water or strong vertical flow
- Notice when a trail is false, doubled back, masked, or baited
  +10 with caution; −20 if rushed or emotionally invested in the pursuit
- Estimate how long ago a target passed, how fast they moved, and whether they were afraid or injured
  +10 in undisturbed terrain; −20 in busy routes or unstable water

TRAPMAKING (Intellect) — [Craft, Subterfuge]

Trapmaking covers building, setting, hiding, disabling, and understanding traps, snares, alarms, trip-lines, deadfalls, pressure triggers, net rigs, venom points, and hazard devices. It includes both hunting traps and defensive mechanisms. In Undine, traps may use current, silt, coral, living growth, pressure seals, shell springs, weighted nets, or alchemical payloads. A good trap does not look like a trap until it has already become someone's problem.

- Build or set simple traps, snares, alarms, nets, hooks, deadfalls, or warning devices
  +10 with proper materials and time; −20 when improvising under pressure
- Create underwater traps using current, buoyancy, silt, coral, kelp, pressure, or weighted mechanisms
  +10 with terrain that supports the design; −20 in unstable or unfamiliar water
- Hide traps from travelers, guards, beasts, or skilled searchers
  +10 with natural cover; −20 in open terrain or against expert Investigation
- Disable, bypass, or safely trigger traps found in ruins, routes, gates, or camps
  +10 with time and tools; −20 if the trap is ancient, living, magical, or already triggered
- Use alchemical, venomous, barbed, netting, or noise-making components in a trap
  +10 with prepared components; −20 if the payload is unstable or likely to harm allies
- Recognize the style, maker, purpose, or target of a trap
  +10 with cultural familiarity; −20 if built by unknown creatures, old-world systems, or arcane mutation

WILD MAGIC (Presence) — [Arcane, Magic, Specialist]

Wild Magic is living, instinctive, ecological, and relationship-bound magic. It works through growth, healing, beasts, routes, omens, tides, bodies, and the strange wisdom of the natural world after the Deluge. Kelpway Green-Tide Healers are the most famous practitioners, but Wild Magic also appears among Leviathan-Tide route mystics, isolated healers, beast-bonded wanderers, and some deepwater seers. It is not careless magic. It is simply not courtly, sealed, or obedient in the way Formal Magic claims to be.

- Cast spells from wild schools such as Greenwater Rites, Moon-Tide Mysteries, certain Brine Rites, beast rites, and some Abyssal Rites
  +10 in living terrain or with proper natural signs; −20 in sterile vaults, dead ruins, or hostile arcane contamination
- Perform magical healing, living-growth treatment, mutation calming, venom cleansing, or restorative rites
  +10 with fresh ingredients, touch, and time; −20 if the wound is severe, corrupted, or caused by old-world magic
- Read omens through plants, beasts, route changes, dreams, migration signs, or unusual growth
  +10 when the signs are strong; −20 if fear, politics, or old magic distorts them
- Commune with living routes, sacred groves, wounded beasts, reef growth, or migration patterns
  +10 with respect and preparation; −20 if the place or creature has been harmed by the caster's people
- Shape minor living growth for aid, concealment, binding, shelter, or warning
  +10 with healthy growth nearby; −20 if the growth is sick, alien, or unwilling
- Resist, soothe, or identify wild arcane mutation in people, beasts, plants, or water
  +10 in early stages; −20 if the mutation is old, hungry, or tied to a powerful source

Chapter Nine: Magic of the Drowned Realms

Magic After the Deluge

Magic drowned the world.

That is the common belief. The details change by Bloodtide, city, clan, and scholar, but few deny the shape of the old wound. The Deluge was not a natural flood. It was arcane in nature. Something was called, broken, opened, awakened, or mishandled. The old world fell beneath the sea, and magic entered everything that survived.

Now magic lives in reef walls, pressure gates, pearl memories, old vaults, leviathan routes, greenwater growth, abyssal marks, and the bodies of the Bloodtides themselves. It hides in the bones of ancient cities. It stains beasts. It changes wounds. It waits in sealed rooms. It speaks through current, pressure, dream, and ruin.

The Drowned Realms do not treat magic as one thing. A Coral Court Tide Magister and a Kelpway Green-Tide Healer may both bend the world, but they do not do it the same way. An Arkborn Relic Scholar may insist magic is safe when handled by law and record. A Shellborn mason may answer that the old world had laws and records too. A Gloam-Eyed Seer may say nothing at all, then refuse to cross a trench the others have not learned to fear.

Magic in Undine is useful. It is beautiful at times. It can save a life, seal a gate, expose a lie, calm a beast, open a vault, or guide a traveler away from disaster.

It is also never innocent.

A spell may solve one danger and wake another. A ritual may reveal truth that no court can afford. A healing growth may close a wound while leaving a mark beneath the skin. A current-working may move an enemy and disturb a sleeping thing below. A relic rite may open a door and prove that the door was closed for a reason.

Magic is not rare enough to ignore.

It is not safe enough to trust.

Formal Magic and Wild Magic

Undine uses two broad magic Skills: **Formal Magic** and **Wild Magic**.

A spell's School describes its tradition, theme, and effects. The Skill tells the player what to roll.

Formal Magic

Formal Magic is structured magic. It is taught, recorded, witnessed, bounded, and shaped by known procedure. Its practitioners use formulae, signs, tools, gestures, titles, seals, diagrams, and ritual law. Formal Magic claims safety through discipline.

This claim is only partly true.

Formal Magic is common among Coral Court Tide Magisters, Arkborn Relic Scholars, Domewrights, Shellhold ward-workers, disciplined abyssal practitioners, and certain trained court or temple specialists. It is the magic of pearl archives, current law, pressure seals, reef systems, old-world interfaces, formal wards, and controlled rites.

Formal Magic is not gentle. It can move water, crush a foe, bind a memory, activate a relic, seal a rupture, or force darkness into obedience. But it tends to leave records. It has forms. It can be studied, challenged, repeated, and judged.

That is its strength.

That is also its arrogance.

Wild Magic

Wild Magic is living magic. It is ecological, instinctive, route-bound, beast-bound, body-bound, or omen-driven. It moves through growth, blood, breath, pain, migration, dream, moon-pull, venom, roots, living water, and the behavior of creatures.

Wild Magic is common among Kelpway Green-Tide Healers, Leviathan-Tide Migration Oracles, Beast-Speakers, route mystics, isolated healers, deep seers, and those who learn from living places rather than formal schools.

Wild Magic is not careless. A Kelpway healer may be more disciplined than any court mage. But their discipline is different. They do not command the world through law. They ask, coax, cut, bind, suffer, listen, and sometimes bargain.

Wild Magic is the main source of direct magical healing in Undine. It can stabilize wounds, soothe pain, slow mutation, support rest, calm beasts, read living signs, and help the body survive what should have killed it.

It is also dangerous. A living spell may grow beyond its purpose. A healing rite may ask for more than expected. A route omen may come too late. A brine offering may draw something hungry.

Essence and Casting

Magic uses **Essence**, as established in the One-on-One RPG System. Essence represents the character's inner reserve of magical force, spiritual endurance, arcane capacity, or living connection to the forces they call.

When a character casts a spell, they spend the listed Essence cost and make the required Test. Formal spells use **Formal Magic**. Wild spells use **Wild Magic**.

The Skill value is the Target Number, modified by the scene.

Favorable conditions may grant +10, +20, or +30 Advantage. Harsh conditions may impose −10, −20, or −30 Disadvantage. The Director should use the same modifier logic as other One-on-One Tests.

Common favorable conditions include:

- correct tools or focus;

- calm casting space;
- proper ritual materials;
- strong connection to the spell's School;
- assistance from a relevant Skill;
- casting in a place suited to the magic;
- time to prepare.

Common unfavorable conditions include:

- injury or pain;
- violent current;
- darkness or sensory overload;
- hostile pressure;
- rushed casting;
- damaged materials;
- broken ritual conditions;
- arcane contamination;
- casting outside the spell's proper environment.

A spell's effect happens on a success. Degree of Success may improve the result. Failure may create backlash, misdirection, cost, or an advancing Clock. A failed casting always expends the normally required Essence cost.

Magic should not feel like a separate game. It uses the same logic as the rest of Undine. A Test is made when the outcome matters. DoS and DoF tell the table how cleanly the magic works.

Ritual Tags

Ritual magic is not a separate Skill. It is a spell tag.

A spell with the **Ritual** tag takes longer, requires more care, and often needs tools, materials, a proper place, or participation from others. Rituals may be safer than action spells when done correctly, but they are also easier to interrupt.

A spell may have any of the following tags:

- **Action**: Cast during a tense scene, often in combat or immediate danger.
- **Ritual**: Requires a scene, hour, rest period, or longer formal process.
- **Extended**: May be resolved through a Clock or repeated Tests.
- **Sustained**: Remains active while the caster maintains focus.
- **Resisted**: Allows a target to oppose or resist the effect.
- **Current**: Affects water flow, movement, or position.
- **Pressure**: Affects depth, compression, force, or pressure conditions.
- **Memory**: Reads, stores, alters, or reveals impressions.
- **Omen**: Reveals signs, warnings, or symbolic truths.
- **Structure**: Affects buildings, gates, reefs, ruins, or systems.
- **Relic**: Interacts with old-world devices or sealed magic.
- **Healing**: Supports recovery, stabilization, cleansing, or bodily repair.
- **Mutation**: Detects, slows, worsens, or interacts with arcane mutation.

- **Blood**: Uses blood, brine, sacrifice, or bodily cost.
- **Abyssal**: Draws on darkness, blackwater, trench signs, or deep pressure.

The tag tells the Director how the spell behaves in play. A Ritual spell should not be cast like a quick attack. An Action spell should not casually solve a month-long curse. A Relic spell may require access to an old device. A Structure spell may need a wall, gate, reef, or system to affect.

Learning Spells

A character learns magic the same way most dangerous useful things are learned in the Drowned Realms: through study, exposure, mentorship, theft, survival, or some combination of all five. To practice magic, a character must possess either **Formal Magic** or **Wild Magic** and must have access to an actual source of learning.

A source may be a teacher, spell text, pearl record, shell-script tablet, reef-memory wall, Arkborn diagram plate, Kelpway route-knot sequence, Leviathan-Tide omen hide, abyssal pressure stone, old-world relic interface, or another source appropriate to the spell's School.

A character cannot learn a spell from nothing. They must find someone or something that carries the working.

Starting Spells

A character with **Formal Magic** or **Wild Magic** begins play with **1 spell**, plus additional spells based on the value of the chosen magic Skill.

Magic Skill Value	Bonus Spells	Total Starting Spells
1–20	+1	2 spells
21–40	+2	3 spells
41–60	+3	4 spells
61–80	+4	5 spells

A character who has both **Formal Magic** and **Wild Magic** tracks spells for each Skill separately. The Director should decide whether such training is available at character creation. In most cases, beginning characters should focus on one magical tradition unless their Bloodtide, Archetype, or backstory strongly supports broader training.

Starting spells should fit the character's culture and Archetype. A Coral Court Tide Magister is likely to know spells from **Current Law**, **Pearl Divination**, **Reefwork**, or **Pressurecraft**. A Kelpway Green-Tide Healer is likely to know **Greenwater Rites**. A Migration Oracle often

begins with **Moon-Tide Mysteries**. An Arkborn Relic Scholar may know **Relic Sorcery**. A Gloam-Eyed Seer may know restrained **Abyssal Rites**.

Learning New Spells During Play

A character may learn new spells during downtime or through major story events. To learn a spell, the character must have:

- the correct magic Skill;
- access to a source of instruction;
- enough time to study or train;
- permission from the Director;
- and a successful learning Test, when the outcome is uncertain.

The learning Test usually uses **Scholar** when studying a written, recorded, encoded, or preserved source. This includes tomes, shell-script tablets, scrolls kept in sealed tubes, Arkborn diagram plates, pearl records, reef-memory walls, old-world inscriptions, and similar materials.

Learning from a living teacher may use **Scholar**, **Insight**, **Concentration**, **Formal Magic**, or **Wild Magic**, depending on the situation. A formal tutor may require Scholar or Formal Magic. A Kelpway healer may teach through practice, requiring Wild Magic or Medicine. A Leviathan-Tide oracle may require Insight, Currentcraft, or Wild Magic to understand the signs. An abyssal teacher may demand Concentration before any spell is even attempted.

Suggested Learning Tests

Use **Scholar** when the character studies:

- tomes or scrolls kept in sealed tubes;
- pearl records;
- shell-script tablets;
- Arkborn diagram plates;
- reef-memory walls;
- legal spell formulae;
- old-world inscriptions;
- preserved spell ledgers;
- formal school records.

Use **Formal Magic** when the character practices:

- courtly spell forms;
- pressure formulae;
- relic interfaces;
- reefwork patterns;
- controlled abyssal rites;
- current diagrams;
- pearl divination procedures.

Use **Wild Magic** when the character learns through:

- living growth;
- route signs;
- healing rites;
- beast behavior;
- migration omens;
- moon-tide dreams;
- pressure visions;
- blood or brine offerings.

Use another Skill only when the spell source clearly demands it. A spell hidden in a map might require **Cartography** before it can be studied. A

beast-bond spell might require **Beast Handling**. A spell preserved in a broken old-world device might require **Relic Lore** or **Deepworks** before the actual learning Test.

Learning Time

The Director chooses the required time based on the source and spell.

- **Simple instruction**: a few days of downtime
- **Formal training**: one or more weeks
- **Difficult source**: a week or more of study
- **Dangerous or damaged source**: extended downtime or a Clock
- **Forbidden, ancient, or unstable spell**: a full adventure, teacher, ritual, or major discovery

A new spell should feel earned. It may come as a reward for saving a teacher, opening a vault, surviving a route, restoring a reef-memory wall, recovering a pearl record, or bargaining with a deepwater order.

Learning Test Results

On a successful learning Test, the character learns the spell and may use it normally.

At 5+ **DoS**, the character learns the spell cleanly. The first time they cast it, they gain +10 Advantage, or the Director may reveal one useful limitation, hidden danger, or cultural detail about the spell.

At 10+ **DoS**, the character may also learn a related spell lead, teacher name, missing formula, or clue to a stronger version of the working.

On failure, the character does not learn the spell yet. They may try again after gaining more time, better instruction, cleaner materials, or a clearer source.

At 5+ **DoF**, the character misunderstands something important. The Director may introduce a complication, false version, missing step, or minor backlash during practice.

At 10+ **DoF**, the learning attempt may damage the source, offend a teacher, advance an Exposure or Arcane Complication Clock, or cause the spell to mark the character in some visible or story-relevant way.

Restrictions by Tradition

Not every spell can be learned from every source.

A Coral Court pearl record will not teach a Kelpway healing rite unless the spell was deliberately recorded there. An Arkborn diagram plate will not explain a Leviathan-Tide migration omen in full. A Gloam-Eyed pressure stone may reveal signs that a surface-trained mage cannot interpret. A living route may refuse a character who has harmed it.

The Director should use tradition as story, not as a wall. A character can cross boundaries, but they need a reason, a source, and often a price.

Spell Theft

Spells can be stolen.

A character may steal a spell record, copy a shell tablet, memorize a pearl sequence, carve a diagram from a vault wall, or learn by spying on a ritual. This usually requires Deception, Stealth, Sleight of Hand, Investigation, Relic Lore, or Scholar before the actual learning Test.

Stolen spells often carry risk. They may be incomplete. They may lack safety steps. They may be culturally forbidden. They may belong to someone who will come looking.

In Undine, knowledge survives in many forms.

It also has owners.

Spell Schools

Spell Schools are categories, not separate Skills. A character does not roll Current Law, Pearl Divination, or Reefwork. They roll Formal Magic or Wild Magic, depending on the spell.

Current Law

Current Law is the formal magic of flow, motion, water direction, and controlled movement. It appears in Coral Court training, Shellhold ward systems, Arkborn current diagrams, and some disciplined deepwater traditions.

Pearl Divination

Pearl Divination governs memory, truth, testimony, stored impressions, legal visions, and formal omen-reading through pearls, coral memory, and reflective materials.

Pressurecraft

Pressurecraft is formal pressure magic. It shields against depth, compresses force, stabilizes chambers, seals ruptures, and turns the weight of the sea into structure or violence.

Reefwork

Reefwork shapes cultivated coral, living reef, city wards, growth barriers, reef memory, and controlled living architecture. It is most common in the Coral Courts, but other traditions know limited forms.

Relic Sorcery

Relic Sorcery interfaces with pre-Deluge devices, sealed systems, old-world inscriptions, dead mechanisms, and dangerous arcane remnants. It is strongly tied to Arkborn traditions.

Abyssal Rites

Abyssal Rites cover disciplined deepwater magic of darkness, blackwater pressure, fear, hidden signs, restraint, and trench-bound knowledge. The Gloam-Eyed and some Blackfin traditions use guarded forms. The Ultharic Spawn practice darker versions.

Greenwater Rites

Greenwater Rites are the living magic of growth, healing, venom, roots, kelp, soft coral, and the small lives of the sea. They are most strongly tied

to the Kelpway Clans, Green-Tide Healers, route mystics, and wild healers.

Brine Rites

Brine Rites govern blood, salt, pain, survival, sacrifice, oath, and body memory. They can bind wounds, mark vows, read scars, strengthen the body under stress, or turn suffering into power.

Moon-Tide Mysteries

Moon-Tide Mysteries are the wild magic of migration, tide-pull, route omens, dreams, leviathan signs, and the slow turning of the sea. They are common among Leviathan-Tide Migration Oracles, Beast-Speakers, and mystics who read warning in movement rather than written record.

Spell Stat Block

Each spell uses the following format.

Spell Name
School: The spell's magical school.
Skill: Formal Magic or Wild Magic.
Tags: Casting and effect tags.
Cost: Essence cost.
Time: Action, scene, rest period, hour, or extended.
Range: Self, touch, near, far, area, structure, route, or special.
Test: The Skill rolled.
Resist: The Attribute or Skill used to resist, if any.
Effect: What happens on a success.
DoS: Improved effect on strong success.
Failure: What happens on failure.
Special: Any Bloodtide, environment, ritual, or school-specific notes.

The Director should read spell effects in the fiction first. A spell that moves current may shift a foe, help an ally escape, disturb silt, or redirect floating debris. A spell that reads memory may reveal truth, but it may not explain context. A spell that seals a rupture may hold long enough for escape but not repair the whole structure.

Magic should answer a problem.

It should also leave the world feeling dangerous.

Formal Magic Spell List

Current Law Spells

Bend the Current

School: Current Law
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Action, Current, Movement
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: Action
Range: Near
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: Currentcraft or Athletics if used against a creature

Effect:
The caster redirects a nearby current. On a success, the caster may grant +10 Advantage to one immediate movement, escape, pursuit, or repositioning Test. If used against a target, the spell may push that target one position on the Three-Plane Hex.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the caster may also impose −10 Disadvantage on the target's next movement Test, or shift an ally one position without requiring their action.

Failure:
The current slips. The Director may move one nearby creature or object in an unwanted direction.

Special:
This spell is common among Tide Magisters and formal current-workers.

Stillwater Moment

School: Current Law
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Action, Current, Control
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: Action
Range: Near area
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster calms nearby water for a brief moment. On a success, silt, drift, small debris, and minor current disturbance settle enough to allow one clear action. The next Investigation, Lockpicking, Medicine, Formal Magic, or ranged attack Test in the affected area gains +10 Advantage if disturbed water was the main obstacle.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the stillness lasts long enough for two related actions.

Failure:
The water stills unevenly. Silt gathers in the wrong place or visibility worsens, imposing −10 Disadvantage on the next sight-based Test in the area.

Special:
Stillwater Moment does not stop powerful currents, living water, or major environmental hazards.

Flow-Shear

School: Current Law
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Action, Current, Resisted
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: Action
Range: Near
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: Currentcraft or Endurance

Effect:
The caster creates a sharp crossing flow that batters a target from two directions. On a success, the target suffers −10 Disadvantage on their next physical action and may be shifted one position on the Three-Plane Hex.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the target is also knocked off balance, loses grip on an unsecured object, or is forced into a worse position.

Failure:
The crossing flow rebounds. The caster or a nearby ally suffers −10 Disadvantage on their next Currentcraft or Athletics Test.

Special:
Flow-Shear is especially useful in open water or near existing current.

Guided Drift

School: Current Law
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Ritual, Current, Travel
Cost: 2 Essence

Time: One scene
Range: Traveling group or small vehicle
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster lays a controlled pattern into the surrounding water. On a success, a traveling group, skiff, sled, or small convoy gains +10 Advantage on the next Currentcraft or Cartography-supported travel Test through the named route.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the group also avoids one minor drift hazard, silt pocket, or current delay.

Failure:
The pattern is too rigid for living water. The Director introduces a route complication, delay, or unexpected current shift.

Special:
Guided Drift does not reveal unknown dangers. It helps travelers hold a planned route.

Against the Pull

School: Current Law
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Action, Current, Protection
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: Action
Range: Self or touch
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster wraps the target in a brief counter-flow. On a success, the target gains +10 Advantage on one Test to resist forced movement, downpull, undertow, drag, or being moved on the Three-Plane Hex.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the target may also hold one nearby ally, object, line, or tool against the same force.

Failure:
The counter-flow catches poorly. The target resists the first pull but suffers −10 Disadvantage on their next movement action.

Special:
This spell is valued by Shellhold crews, rescue divers, and gate workers.

Parting Slipstream

School: Current Law
Skill: Formal Magic

Tags: Action, Current, Area
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: Action
Range: Near line or path
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster opens a brief slipstream through water, silt, or drifting debris. On a success, the caster or an ally may move through a difficult water path without suffering the usual movement penalty for one action.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the slipstream may carry two allies, a small vehicle, or a wounded target.

Failure:
The slipstream collapses early. Anyone using it must make Currentcraft or suffer −10 Disadvantage on their next action.

Special:
This spell cannot pass through solid barriers, sealed gates, or living masses.

Pearl Divination Spells

Pearl Witness

School: Pearl Divination
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Ritual, Memory, Omen
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Touch
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster reads a stored impression from a pearl, witness bead, coral memory wall, archive shell, or similar medium. On a success, the caster receives one clear sensory impression tied to the recorded event.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the impression includes a useful detail such as a face, phrase, symbol, direction, or emotional truth.

Failure:
The memory clouds. The caster receives an incomplete impression or one warped by the strongest emotion present.

Special:
Pearl Witness reveals what was recorded. It does not prove that the record is complete or honest.

Clear the False Gleam

School: Pearl Divination
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Action, Memory, Truth
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: Action
Range: Near
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: Deception or Resolve if used against a person

Effect:
The caster sharpens the water around a statement, object, or image. On a success, they sense whether a visible sign, spoken claim, or simple presented fact carries deliberate falsehood.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the caster also gains a clue about the nature of the falsehood: omission, disguise, altered record, fear, or direct lie.

Failure:
The spell reflects the caster's suspicion back at them. The Director may give an uncertain answer or impose −10 Disadvantage on the caster's next Insight Test in the scene.

Special:
This spell does not reveal full truth. It detects false gleam.

Memory Thread

School: Pearl Divination
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Ritual, Memory, Investigation
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Touch or local scene
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster links several small impressions into a usable sequence. On a success, they may connect one clue, witness impression, object, or memory fragment to another. This grants a meaningful lead.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the Director reveals a stronger connection, such as motive, sequence, or the next likely place to search.

Failure:
The thread tangles. The caster connects two details in a misleading way, or the Director advances an Investigation or Crisis Clock.

Special:
Memory Thread supports investigation. It should not replace the need to gather clues.

Oath in the Pearl

School: Pearl Divination
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Ritual, Memory, Social
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Touch
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: Resolve if unwilling

Effect:
The caster seals a spoken oath, agreement, or testimony into a prepared pearl or witness bead. On a success, the pearl can later confirm the words spoken and the emotional state of the speaker.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the pearl also records one strong hidden feeling: fear, shame, hatred, relief, or sincerity.

Failure:
The oath records poorly. The pearl may crack, blur the words, or preserve only emotion without language.

Special:
Coral Courts rely on this spell in legal and diplomatic contexts.

Ancestral Glimmer

School: Pearl Divination
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Ritual, Memory, Lineage
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Touch

Test: Formal Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster studies a bloodline token, family pearl, relic mark, crest, or inherited object. On a success, they glimpse one significant ancestral connection, duty, stain, or old event tied to the subject.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the glimpse reveals a name, house, place, or unresolved obligation.

Failure:
The spell finds only pride, fear, or curated memory. The result is incomplete or politically dangerous.

Special:
This spell is powerful in court stories but should not provide a full genealogy without further research.

Mirror of the Drowned Hour

School: Pearl Divination
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Ritual, Memory, Deluge
Cost: 3 Essence
Time: One hour
Range: Touch or prepared reflective surface
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster draws an old echo from a place, relic, pearl, or surface connected to the Deluge or a major drowning event. On a success, they witness a brief symbolic vision of what happened there.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the vision includes one practical clue: a route, door, name, warning, or surviving object.

Failure:
The drowned hour overwhelms the caster. They suffer −10 Disadvantage on their next Concentration or Resolve Test, and the Director may introduce a disturbing but incomplete image.

Special:
This spell should feel rare and heavy. It may attract attention from old magic.

Pressurecraft Spells

Depth Ward

School: Pressurecraft
Skill: Formal Magic

Tags: Action, Pressure, Protection
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: Action
Range: Self or touch
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster places a brief ward against pressure strain. On a success, the target gains +10 Advantage on one Endurance, Currentcraft, or Survival Test against pressure, rapid descent, compression, or depth discomfort.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the ward lasts for the scene against minor pressure strain.

Failure:
The ward tightens unevenly. The target suffers brief pain and takes −10 Disadvantage on their next physical Test.

Special:
Depth Ward does not allow safe travel into extreme depth by itself.

Crushing Hand

School: Pressurecraft
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Action, Pressure, Resisted
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: Action
Range: Near
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: Endurance or Athletics

Effect:
The caster compresses water around a target. On a success, the target suffers a Light Wound or is restrained briefly, Director's choice based on the scene.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the target also suffers −10 Disadvantage on their next physical action, or the restraint lasts until they spend an action breaking free.

Failure:
The compression rebounds through the caster's body. The caster suffers −10 Disadvantage on their next Concentration or Formal Magic Test.

Special:
Against large creatures, this spell may inflict discomfort or positional effect rather than a Wound.

Seal the Breach

School: Pressurecraft
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Ritual, Pressure, Structure
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Near structure
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster reinforces a leaking seal, cracked chamber, gate seam, damaged pressure wall, or unstable rupture. On a success, the breach holds long enough for escape, evacuation, or one major repair attempt.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the breach holds for the scene, or grants +10 Advantage to the next Deepworks or Crafting Test made to repair it.

Failure:
The breach seals in the wrong pattern. Pressure builds elsewhere, and the Director may advance a Collapse, Flood, or Crisis Clock.

Special:
This spell is not permanent repair unless combined with proper work.

Weight of the Deep

School: Pressurecraft
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Action, Pressure, Area, Resisted
Cost: 3 Essence
Time: Action
Range: Near area
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: Endurance or Currentcraft

Effect:
The caster increases local pressure in a small area. On a success, affected targets suffer −10 Disadvantage on movement, attack, or escape actions for one round.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, one affected target is also pushed downward one position on the Three-Plane Hex.

Failure:
The pressure collapses inward unpredictably. The caster or an ally in the area suffers the movement penalty instead.

Special:
This spell is dangerous near fragile structures or wounded allies.

Chamber Calm

School: Pressurecraft
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Ritual, Pressure, Structure
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: One chamber or small structure
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster stabilizes pressure within a chamber, room, gatehouse, recovery space, or vehicle compartment. On a success, characters inside ignore one minor pressure-related penalty for the scene or rest period.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the chamber also becomes suitable for Medicine, Deepworks, or Ritual work that would otherwise be too unstable.

Failure:
The pressure steadies briefly, then surges. The Director may impose −10 Disadvantage on the next relevant Test or advance a system Clock.

Special:
Domewrights and Shellhold ward-workers prize this spell.

Compression Shield

School: Pressurecraft
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Action, Pressure, Defense
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: Action
Range: Self or near ally
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster forms a dense pressure layer that absorbs impact. On a success, the target gains +10 Advantage on one defense against a physical attack, debris strike, predator charge, or blunt force.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the shield also reduces minor forced movement or prevents the target from being knocked away.

Failure:
The shield forms too close. The target is protected, but suffers −10 Disadvantage on their next movement action from stiffness and pain.

Special:
Compression Shield does not protect well against poison, mental effects, or internal magic.

Reefwork Spells

Coral Grasp

School: Reefwork
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Action, Structure, Resisted
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: Action
Range: Near coral or reef growth
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: Escape or Athletics

Effect:
The caster commands nearby coral or reef growth to seize a target. On a success, the target is held, slowed, or partially restrained until they break free.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the coral also imposes −10 Disadvantage on the target's next physical action.

Failure:
The reef grips the wrong thing, breaks, or lashes at the caster's side. The Director may create a minor hazard.

Special:
This spell requires coral, reef, or compatible living structure nearby.

Nacre Veil

School: Reefwork
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Action, Defense, Structure
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: Action
Range: Self or near ally
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster draws a thin shimmering veil of nacre-like magic over the target. On a success, the target gains +10 Advantage on one defense against sight-based targeting, light glare, cutting fragments, or minor magical residue.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the veil lasts for the scene against one narrow hazard type chosen when cast.

Failure:
The veil flashes too brightly or clouds vision. The target suffers −10 Disadvantage on their next sight-based Test.

Special:
Coral Court duelists sometimes receive this spell before formal combat.

Reef Memory Stir

School: Reefwork
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Ritual, Memory, Structure
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Touch
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster awakens a faint memory stored in old reef, coral wall, living architecture, or cultivated court growth. On a success, the reef reveals one sensory impression of a recent or important event.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the impression includes a clearer detail such as a direction, emotion, voice, or sign.

Failure:
The reef remembers pain, not fact. The caster receives an emotional flash and suffers −10 Disadvantage on their next Insight or Investigation Test.

Special:
Reef memories can be curated, damaged, or infected.

Shaping Bloom

School: Reefwork
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Ritual, Structure, Growth
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Near reef or coral
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster encourages controlled coral or reef growth into a simple useful shape, such as a brace, handhold, screen, step, seal edge, or small barrier. On a success, the growth performs the intended simple function.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the growth is strong enough to grant +10 Advantage to one related Athletics, Deepworks, Crafting, Escape, or Stealth Test.

Failure:
The growth is brittle, ugly, or wrong. It may fail under strain or draw attention.

Special:
This spell cannot create complex machines or large structures quickly.

Redbloom Rebuke

School: Reefwork
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Ritual, Mutation, Cleansing
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Touch or near infected growth
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: Mutation severity, if needed

Effect:
The caster forces corrupted reef growth, Redbloom, or hostile coral infection to reveal itself and pull back briefly. On a success, the infection stops advancing for one scene, or one hidden patch becomes visible.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the next Medicine, Herbalism, Wild Magic, Deepworks, or Crafting Test made to treat or remove the growth gains a clear opening. The Director may remove one penalty caused by hidden infection.

Failure:
The corruption reacts. The growth spreads, lashes, releases spores, or advances a Mutation or Infection Clock.

Special:
This spell contains Redbloom. It does not cure major outbreaks alone.

Living Gate

School: Reefwork
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Ritual, Structure, Ward
Cost: 3 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Touch
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster opens, closes, seals, or persuades a living reef gate, coral door, grown threshold, or cultivated barrier. On a success, the gate responds for the caster or allows one controlled passage.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the gate may also remain loyal to the caster's command for the scene or deny passage to one named enemy.

Failure:
The gate resists or obeys too literally. It may seal at the wrong time, trap someone, or alert its keepers.

Special:
Living Gate works only on living or semi-living architecture.

Relic Sorcery Spells

Wake the Old Line

School: Relic Sorcery
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Ritual, Relic, Structure
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Touch

Test: Formal Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster activates a dormant line, conduit, seal-trace, or old-world circuit within a relic structure. On a success, the system performs one simple known function or reveals whether power still passes through it.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the caster learns one additional truth about the system's purpose, damage, or danger.

Failure:
The old line wakes badly. The Director may trigger a minor hazard, advance a Relic or Exposure Clock, or cause the system to respond in an unintended way.

Special:
This spell should be risky when used without Relic Lore or Deepworks support.

Seal-Name Reading

School: Relic Sorcery
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Ritual, Relic, Memory
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Touch
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster reads the functional name, warning name, or access designation of a sealed relic, chamber, or mechanism. On a success, they learn what the thing was called or what it was meant to control.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the caster also learns whether the seal is protective, restrictive, ceremonial, emergency-based, or deceptive.

Failure:
The name comes through incomplete or in a dangerous old form. The caster may misread the seal, or the mechanism notices the attempt.

Special:
Names matter in old systems. Knowing one may create opportunity and danger.

Lock of the Drowned Age

School: Relic Sorcery
Skill: Formal Magic

Tags: Action, Relic, Ward
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: Action or scene
Range: Touch
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: Lockpicking, Deepworks, or Formal Magic if opposed

Effect:
The caster reinforces or temporarily seals a door, case, hatch, archive, relic housing, or chamber according to old-world locking principles. On a success, attempts to open it suffer −10 Disadvantage for the scene.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the seal also resists one magical or Deepworks-based opening attempt.

Failure:
The lock accepts the wrong authority. It may seal against the caster, open briefly, or attach itself to an old command.

Special:
Vault Wardens use this spell often, but never casually.

Speak with the Mechanism

School: Relic Sorcery
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Ritual, Relic, Structure
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Touch or near system
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster coaxes a relic system, sealed mechanism, or old device into revealing its current state through sound, light, pressure, diagram, or symbolic response. On a success, the caster learns whether it is active, damaged, dormant, hostile, corrupted, or waiting for input.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the caster may ask one focused follow-up about what the mechanism needs, fears, lacks, or protects.

Failure:
The mechanism answers in a way that is technically true but dangerous, incomplete, or too literal.

Special:
This spell does not grant control by itself.

Containment Circle

School: Relic Sorcery
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Ritual, Relic, Ward, Structure
Cost: 3 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Near area
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: None, or Formal Magic if opposed

Effect:
The caster creates a temporary containment boundary around a relic, spill, unstable device, magical leak, or sealed object. On a success, the contained effect does not spread for the scene.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the containment also grants one safe attempt to study, move, or shut down the source.

Failure:
The boundary forms with a flaw. It holds briefly,

then leaks, alerts the source, or advances an Exposure, Relic, or Crisis Clock.

Special:
Containment Circle is often used before anyone knows whether touching the relic is suicide.

Old Command Override

School: Relic Sorcery
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Ritual, Relic, Structure, Dangerous
Cost: 3 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Touch
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: System difficulty, if needed

Effect:
The caster attempts to override a simple old-world command in a relic system, door, sentinel, vault device, or sealed mechanism. On a success, the system pauses, changes one limited behavior, or allows temporary access.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the override lasts for the scene or avoids triggering the system's most obvious defense.

Failure:
The old command rejects the caster. The Director may trigger an alarm, defense, lockdown, backlash, or Relic Clock advance.

Special:
This is one of the most dangerous common Arkborn spells. It should never feel routine.

Abyssal Rites Spells

Blackwater Mantle

School: Abyssal Rites
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Action, Abyssal, Darkness
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: Action
Range: Self or touch
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster wraps the target in a dim blackwater veil. On a success, the target gains +10 Advantage on one Stealth or Escape Test made in darkness, silt, or low light.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the mantle lasts for the scene or also reduces the target's visible bioluminescence.

Failure:
The veil clings too heavily. The target suffers −10 Disadvantage on their next Awareness or Currentcraft Test.

Special:
Gloam-Eyed practitioners use this carefully. Ultharic versions are darker and more invasive.

Pressure of Silence

School: Abyssal Rites
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Action, Abyssal, Pressure, Social
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: Action
Range: Near
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: Resolve or Concentration

Effect:
The caster presses silence into a target's throat, thoughts, or courage. On a success, the target suffers −10 Disadvantage on their next Oratory, Performance, spellcasting, command, or alarm-raising action.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the target cannot speak above a strained whisper for one round or brief exchange.

Failure:
The silence rebounds. The caster's next spoken spell, command, or social Test suffers −10 Disadvantage.

Special:
This spell is feared in courtrooms, gate halls, and temple disputes.

Trench Sign

School: Abyssal Rites
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Ritual, Abyssal, Omen
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Local area
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster reads deepwater signs in stone, cold, pressure, darkness, or drifting silt. On a success, the Director reveals whether the local area bears signs of abyssal presence, recent passage, forbidden rites, old fear, or deep pressure disturbance.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the caster learns one broad direction, age, or source of the sign.

Failure:
The signs are misread or too old. The caster may draw a false conclusion or attract attention from something that notices the reading.

Special:
This spell is useful but unsettling. Some signs should not be followed.

Eyes Under Silt

School: Abyssal Rites
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Ritual, Abyssal, Perception
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Near area
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster attunes to small pressure shifts beneath silt, stone, or darkness. On a success, they may detect hidden movement, buried creatures, concealed bodies, or recent disturbance in the local area.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, they also learn whether the hidden thing is living, dead, constructed, or something stranger.

Failure:
The caster senses too much. They suffer −10 Disadvantage on their next Awareness or Insight Test from sensory overload.

Special:
This spell does not provide sight through solid walls. It reads pressure and disturbance.

Dread Descent

School: Abyssal Rites
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Action, Abyssal, Fear, Resisted
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: Action
Range: Near
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: Resolve

Effect:
The caster forces the target to feel the pull of deep fear. On a success, the target suffers −10 Disadvantage on their next attack, spell, or movement action.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the target must either retreat one position, freeze briefly, or lose their next aggressive action, Director's choice.

Failure:
The fear finds the caster instead. The caster suffers −10 Disadvantage on their next Resolve or Concentration Test.

Special:
This spell is not mind control. It brings fear to the surface.

Ward of the Deep Threshold

School: Abyssal Rites
Skill: Formal Magic
Tags: Ritual, Abyssal, Ward, Structure
Cost: 3 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Threshold, passage, gate, or chamber
Test: Formal Magic
Resist: Formal Magic or Resolve if forced through

Effect:
The caster marks a threshold with deepwater pressure and warning. On a success, creatures attempting to cross without permission suffer −10 Disadvantage on the first action they take after crossing, unless they resist successfully.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the caster is alerted when the ward is crossed, so long as they remain within the same region or ritual bond.

Failure:
The ward marks the threshold incorrectly. It may hinder an ally, fail against the intended target, or draw abyssal attention.

Special:
Gloam-Eyed settlements use restrained versions of this spell around forbidden routes.

Wild Magic Spell List

Beast-Turn Omen

School: Moon-Tide Mysteries
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Omen, Beast, Route
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Nearby route or observed great beast
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None

Effect: The caster studies the movement of a large beast, migration animal, route-creature, or leviathan sign. On a success, the Director reveals whether the creature's behavior suggests danger, sickness, fear, hunger, route change, or outside influence.

DoS: At 10+ DoS, the caster also learns the most likely direction of the disturbance or the next route segment affected.

Failure: The signs contradict each other. The Director may give incomplete information or advance a relevant Travel, Exposure, or Crisis Clock.

Special: This spell is strongest when used near leviathan routes, open-water herds, mantle giants, worldwhales, or route beasts.

Mantle Dream

School: Moon-Tide Mysteries
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Omen, Dream, Leviathan
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One rest period
Range: Self
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None

Effect: The caster sleeps or enters trance while touching a shed plate, scar mark, parasite shell, route token, or living surface tied to a leviathan. On a success, they receive a dream-image related to the beast's route, fear, pain, memory, or coming turn.

DoS: At 10+ DoS, the dream includes a clear landmark, direction, creature, or emotional truth.

Failure: The dream is crowded with false scale and motion. The caster wakes unsettled and suffers −10 Disadvantage on their first Insight, Currentcraft, or Wild Magic Test that day.

Special: This spell cannot force a leviathan to reveal secrets. It reads what the bond or route allows.

The Route Refuses

School: Moon-Tide Mysteries
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Omen, Travel
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Planned route
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None

Effect: The caster tests whether a planned route carries a strong omen of refusal. This may involve watching drifting shell, released pigment, animal movement, water taste, mantle tremor, or moon-tide pull. On a success, the Director tells the player whether the route is open, dangerous, forbidden by sign, or disturbed by recent change.

DoS: At 10+ DoS, the caster learns one broad reason: predator, pressure, sickness, hostile faction, old magic, route shift, or deep presence.

Failure: The caster misreads one sign. The route may still be traveled, but the Director may introduce a hidden complication.

Special: This spell should not replace exploration. It gives warning, not a complete map.

Parasite Witness

School: Moon-Tide Mysteries
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Beast, Omen, Disease
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Touch
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None

Effect: The caster examines a parasite, barnacle, louse, scar growth, or skin growth taken from a large beast. On a success, they learn something about the host's health, recent route, stress, contamination, or unnatural influence.

DoS: At 10+ DoS, the caster may identify whether the sign points to arcane mutation, ordinary sickness, predator attack, poison, abyssal influence, or environmental change.

Failure: The parasite reacts, bursts, bites, or releases a bad sign. The caster suffers a minor complication, or the Director advances an Exposure Clock.

Special: This is one of the most practical Migration Oracle spells and should see frequent use in leviathan-route campaigns.

Moon-Pull Reading

School: Moon-Tide Mysteries
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Omen, Tide
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Local region
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None

Effect: The caster reads tide pressure, moon-drift, route shadows, and the behavior of small creatures to sense whether the region is moving toward calm, danger, migration, death, or change. On a success, the Director gives one useful environmental truth about the next major scene or travel segment.

DoS: At 10+ DoS, the caster may ask one focused follow-up about timing, direction, or likely hazard.

Failure: The moon-pull feels wrong. The caster takes −10 Disadvantage on the next Currentcraft or Depth Lore Test related to this region.

Special: Works best in open water, migration routes, reef shelves, or places where tide movement is meaningful.

Wake of the Giant

School: Moon-Tide Mysteries
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Action, Current, Beast, Travel
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: Action
Range: Near area
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: Currentcraft or Athletics if used against a target

Effect: The caster calls a brief echo of leviathan movement through the water. This can push allies forward, help a vehicle or group move with force, or shove an enemy one position on the Three-Plane Hex.

DoS: At 10+ DoS, the movement may affect multiple nearby allies or impose −10 Disadvantage on a target's next movement action.

Failure: The wake comes unevenly. The Director may move one unintended creature or create a current hazard.

Special: This is one of the Migration Oracle's more active spells. It gives them a useful combat and travel option without making them a direct battle-mage.

Great-Back Shelter

School: Moon-Tide Mysteries
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Protection, Beast, Travel
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Nearby camp, vehicle, or traveling group
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None

Effect: The caster invokes the sheltering image of a great beast's back. On a success, the traveling group gains +10 Advantage on Tests to endure open-water exposure, maintain formation near a large beast, or resist fear during a dangerous migration passage.

DoS: At 10+ DoS, the protection also applies against one environmental hazard during the next scene, such as cold, silt, minor pressure stress, or route panic.

Failure: The group feels exposed and small. The next fear, panic, or Survival-related Test suffers −10 Disadvantage.

Special: This spell does not create a physical barrier. It steadies bodies and instincts.

Scar Remembers

School: Moon-Tide Mysteries
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Omen, Memory, Beast
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Touch
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None

Effect: The caster touches a scar on a leviathan, route beast, old hide, shed plate, or preserved bone and reads one strong memory carried by the wound. The memory is sensory and emotional, not a clean speech or record.

DoS: At 10+ DoS, the caster gains a clearer image of who or what caused the wound.

Failure: The pain of the scar floods the caster. They suffer −10 Disadvantage on their next Concentration or Insight Test.

Special: This spell can reveal old hunts, predator attacks, route trauma, corruption, betrayal, or ancient contact.

Route-Skin Mark

School: Moon-Tide Mysteries
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Omen, Mark, Travel
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Touch
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None

Effect: The caster marks a willing traveler with a temporary route pattern made from pigment, salt, oil, or shed scale dust. For the next journey segment, the marked traveler gains +10 Advantage on one Currentcraft, Survival, or Danger Sense Test related to the named route.

DoS: At 10+ DoS, the mark may aid two Tests instead of one.

Failure: The mark smears or darkens. It gives no benefit, and the marked traveler draws attention from a minor creature, spirit, omen, or route watcher.

Special: Many Leviathan-Tide clans use this before dangerous crossings.

Turn Before the Dark

School: Moon-Tide Mysteries
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Action, Omen, Defense
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: Reaction or Action, Director's approval
Range: Self or near ally
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None

Effect: The caster reads a sudden omen in motion, shadow, water pressure, or beast behavior and warns someone just before danger strikes. On a success, the target gains +10 Advantage to a defense, escape, Danger Sense, or Currentcraft Test made immediately against the threat.

DoS: At 10+ DoS, the target may also shift one position on the Three-Plane Hex if movement is possible.

Failure: The warning comes too late or points wrong. The Director may impose −10

Disadvantage on the target's next movement or defense Test.

Special: This is a strong signature spell for a Migration Oracle in combat scenes.

Death-Drift Vigil

School: Moon-Tide Mysteries
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Death, Omen, Memory
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Local death site, dead beast, fallen traveler, or leviathan grave
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None

Effect: The caster performs a quiet vigil over a death site. On a success, they learn whether the death was natural, violent, corrupted, sacrificial, or tied to a route omen.

DoS: At 10+ DoS, the caster receives one image or sensation pointing toward the cause or next danger.

Failure: The vigil draws grief too close. The caster suffers −10 Disadvantage on their next Resolve-based Test, or the site stirs something unwelcome.

Special: This spell works especially well around Ossune, leviathan grave sites, vanished route camps, and mysterious mass deaths.

Follow the Vast Shadow

School: Moon-Tide Mysteries
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Travel, Omen, Leviathan
Cost: 3 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Regional route
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None

Effect: The caster seeks the safest route by reading traces left by great beasts. On a success, the next travel segment gains +10 Advantage to Cartography, Currentcraft, or Survival Tests related to following or avoiding leviathan paths.

DoS: At 10+ DoS, the Director reveals one major danger that lies off the safe path.

Failure: The caster follows an old shadow. The route is not false, but it is outdated. The Director introduces a changed hazard.

Bitterroot Mercy

School: Greenwater Rites
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Healing, Plant, Wound
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Touch
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster uses bitterroot paste, living fiber, or medicinal kelp to help close a wound and reduce pain. On a success, the target gains +10 Advantage on the next Medicine Test made to treat one Light or Moderate Wound.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the target may also ignore −10 Disadvantage from pain or other secondary wound effect for the next scene.

Failure:
The medicine bites too deep. The target suffers nausea, burning pain, or muscle tremors and takes −10 Disadvantage on their next physical Test.

Special:
This spell supports healing. It does not replace the need for Medicine when actual wound recovery is required.

Green-Knit Flesh

School: Greenwater Rites
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Healing, Wound, Living Growth
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Touch
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster encourages living growth to bind torn flesh, close bleeding, and stabilize damaged tissue. On a success, the target may immediately stabilize one untreated Wound and prevent it from worsening due to bleeding, shock, or exposure.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the next recovery Test for that Wound gains +10 Advantage.

Failure:
The growth binds poorly. The target is stabilized, but the binding is painful and awkward. They suffer −10 Disadvantage on Athletics, Currentcraft, Escape, or combat Tests until the wound is properly treated.

Special:
Green-Knit Flesh is especially common among Green-Tide Healers. It can stabilize, but it should not erase the importance of Medicine.

Draw the Venom

School: Greenwater Rites
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Healing, Poison, Beast
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Touch
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: Poison potency, if needed

Effect:
The caster draws venom, toxin, or irritant corruption toward the skin using living fibers, bitter herbs, and water pressure. On a success, the target gains +20 Advantage on the next Test to resist or recover from poison, venom, or natural toxin.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the poison's next harmful effect is delayed or reduced, at the Director's discretion.

Failure:
The venom moves, but not cleanly. The target suffers brief spasms, fever, or disorientation and takes −10 Disadvantage on their next action.

Special:
This spell does not affect powerful curses, relic poisons, or abyssal corruption unless the Director allows it.

Quiet the Red

School: Greenwater Rites
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Healing, Mutation, Cleansing
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Touch
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: Mutation severity, if needed

Effect:
The caster slows a visible infection, parasitic growth, Redbloom mark, coral rash, or early arcane mutation. On a success, one related Exposure, Infection, or Mutation Clock is paused for the next scene or rest period.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the target also gains +10 Advantage on the next Medicine, Herbalism, or Wild Magic Test made to treat the condition.

Failure:
The growth reacts defensively. The Clock does not pause, and the target suffers pain, fever, or a brief visible flare of mutation.

Special:
Quiet the Red does not cure major mutation by itself. It buys time.

Salt-Bound Breath

School: Brine Rites
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Action, Healing, Survival, Brine
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: Action
Range: Touch
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster uses a harsh brine rite to steady a body under pressure, shock, drowning panic, or sudden depth stress. On a success, the target gains +10 Advantage on the next Endurance, Concentration, Currentcraft, or Survival Test made to resist environmental harm.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the target also ignores one minor penalty from panic, breath loss, or pressure discomfort for the scene.

Failure:
The brine shocks the body. The target coughs, spasms, or bleeds lightly from the gills and suffers −10 Disadvantage on their next Test.

Special:
Some healers dislike this rite. It works, but it is painful.

Blood-in-the-Water Vow

School: Brine Rites
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Blood, Oath, Tracking
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Touch or local water
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None, or target's Resolve if unwilling and present

Effect:
The caster mingles a drop of blood with brine and speaks a binding intention. On a success, the caster gains +10 Advantage on Tracking, Insight, or Danger Sense Tests related to the named creature, oath-breaker, wounded ally, or blood-marked target for the next journey segment.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the Director may reveal one broad truth: direction, injury, fear, nearness, or whether the target has crossed hostile water.

Failure:
The blood-call draws the wrong attention. A predator, spirit, rival tracker, or minor omen notices the mark.

Special:
This spell can be heroic or grim. It should always feel serious.

Current-Blessed Limbs

School: Current Law
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Action, Current, Movement
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: Action
Range: Self or touch
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster blesses a body to move with nearby water instead of fighting it. On a success, the target gains +10 Advantage on their next Currentcraft Test involving speed, escape, pursuit, ascent, descent, or three-dimensional maneuvering.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the target may also shift one position on the Three-Plane Hex as part of the same action, if movement is possible.

Failure:
The current catches unevenly. The target is shifted one unwanted position or suffers −10 Disadvantage on their next movement Test.

Special:
This is a Wild Magic expression of Current Law. Kelpway guides and Leviathan-Tide mystics use it differently from formal court mages.

Shelter of Living Green

School: Greenwater Rites
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Protection, Plant, Shelter
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Nearby area
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster coaxes nearby kelp, root, soft coral, or

living growth into a temporary shelter. On a success, the shelter grants +10 Advantage on Tests to hide, rest, treat wounds, resist mild exposure, or avoid casual detection for one scene or rest period.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the shelter also imposes −10 Disadvantage on attempts to track or notice those inside unless the searcher has a strong reason to inspect the area.

Failure:
The growth forms poorly, attracts pests, or exposes the group's presence through scent, movement, or unusual color.

Special:
This spell requires nearby living material. It does not create a fortress.

Ask the Small Lives

School: Greenwater Rites
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Omen, Beast, Plant
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Local area
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster reads small living signs: fish scatter, root curl, parasite movement, silt worms, algae bloom, or the absence of ordinary life. On a success, the Director reveals one useful truth about the local area: recent danger, sickness, predator presence, route disturbance, or unnatural influence.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the caster may ask one follow-up about direction, timing, or whether the danger remains nearby.

Failure:
The small lives give confused signs. The Director may provide incomplete information or reveal that something has frightened ordinary nature into silence.

Special:
This spell is excellent for Kelpway mystics and Beast-Speakers. It is not precise divination.

Mend the Route-Beast

School: Greenwater Rites
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Healing, Beast
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Touch
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None, unless the beast resists handling

Effect:
The caster treats a wounded, exhausted, frightened, or sick animal with living magic. On a success, the beast stabilizes, calms, or gains +10 Advantage on its next recovery, endurance, or obedience-related Test.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the beast also becomes more trusting toward the caster or the caster's group for the next scene.

Failure:
The beast panics, thrashes, flees, or lashes out. The Director may call for Beast Handling, Currentcraft, or Athletics to avoid harm.

Special:
This spell works on ordinary beasts and trained creatures. True leviathans require special conditions, route rights, and Director approval.

Moonlit Recovery

School: Moon-Tide Mysteries
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Healing, Rest, Tide
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One rest period
Range: Nearby resting group
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster aligns the resting group with gentle tide rhythms, moon-pull, and open-water breathing. On a success, one patient gains +10 Advantage on a recovery-related Medicine, Endurance, or Survival Test during that rest period.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, a second patient may receive the same benefit, or the primary patient may also clear a minor fatigue, panic, or shock penalty.

Failure:
The rest is troubled by dreams, restless current, or wrong tide timing. The target gains no benefit and wakes uneasy.

Special:
This spell is common among Migration Oracles and route mystics. It is especially useful during travel, but it requires a safe enough rest period to matter.

Wound-Root Offering

School: Brine Rites
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Healing, Blood, Sacrifice
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Touch
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster takes a small wound, bloodletting, or painful offering from themself or a willing participant to empower another's recovery. On a success, the patient gains +20 Advantage on the next Medicine or Endurance Test made to recover from a Wound, poison, or severe exhaustion.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the offering also reduces one immediate complication such as fever, shock, uncontrolled bleeding, or pain.

Failure:
The offering is taken but poorly received. The donor suffers a Light Wound or −10 Disadvantage from pain and weakness, and the patient gains no benefit.

Special:
This is powerful but grim. It should not be casual healing. Many Green-Tide Healers use it only when gentler rites fail.

Call the Clean Current

School: Current Law
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Cleansing, Current, Healing
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One scene

Range: Nearby area or small chamber
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: Contamination severity, if needed

Effect:
The caster calls or shapes a brief clean current through a small area, washing away irritants, weak toxins, bad silt, minor corpse-brine, or light contamination. On a success, the area becomes safer for treatment, rest, or short-term passage. Characters inside gain +10 Advantage on one relevant Medicine, Herbalism, Survival, or Currentcraft Test.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the cleansing also slows a minor environmental hazard or prevents a weak contamination Clock from advancing once.

Failure:
The current stirs what should have stayed settled. Hidden toxins, silt, parasites, or old residue spread into the scene.

Special:
This spell does not purify major cursed sites, relic contamination, or deep abyssal corruption by itself.

Root-Pulse Warning

School: Greenwater Rites
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Omen, Plant, Warning
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Local living growth
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster places a hand, tool, or focus against living kelp, root, reef growth, or plantlike sea life and asks it to carry warning through its body. On a success, the growth reacts when a chosen danger enters the local area. This may be a predator, armed intruder, spreading infection, unnatural current, or named type of creature.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the warning is specific enough to reveal the direction or broad nature of the threat.

Failure:
The growth responds to the wrong disturbance orgoes still. The Director may give a late warning or a false alarm.

Special:
This spell requires living growth large enough to carry the warning. It is common among Kelpway route guardians.

Greenblood Renewal

School: Greenwater Rites
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Healing, Rest, Living Growth
Cost: 3 Essence
Time: One rest period
Range: Touch
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster binds the patient into a living healing bed, kelp cradle, root wrap, or soft reef growth. On a success, the patient may attempt a Recovery Test during that rest period even if the location would normally be too rough, cold, or unstable for proper recovery.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the patient also ignores one minor recovery obstacle such as pain, poor sleep, mild fever, or route exhaustion.

Failure:
The living bed rejects the patient or reacts poorly to the wound. The Recovery Test cannot be attempted through this spell, and the patient wakes with pain, rash, or uneasy dreams.

Special:
This spell does not reduce a Wound state by itself. It makes recovery possible under difficult conditions.

Beast's Shared Calm

School: Moon-Tide Mysteries
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Action, Beast, Emotion, Protection
Cost: 1 Essence
Time: Action
Range: Near beast or rider
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None, or Resolve if the creature is hostile

Effect:
The caster steadies the bond between a creature and those near it. On a success, one trained beast, mount, route animal, or frightened natural creature calms enough to avoid panic, continue moving, or accept handling for the scene.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the beast also grants +10 Advantage to the next Riding, Beast Handling, Currentcraft, or Survival Test involving it.

Failure:
The beast feels the caster's fear or urgency instead. It pulls away, freezes, thrashes, or alerts nearby creatures.

Special:
This spell does not dominate a beast. It shares calm. True leviathans require special access, trust, and Director approval.

Tide-Marked Refuge

School: Moon-Tide Mysteries
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Travel, Protection, Omen
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Small camp, skiff, platform, or shelter
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster marks a temporary refuge with tide pigment, route signs, shell dust, beast oil, or moon-salt. On a success, the refuge blends into the local route. Casual predators, patrols, or wandering creatures are less likely to notice it for one rest period.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the first Tracking, Danger Sense, Stealth, or Survival Test made to avoid discovery from that refuge gains +10 Advantage.

Failure:
The mark draws attention from something curious, hungry, territorial, or spiritually aware.

Special:
This spell works best in open water, route camps, kelp shelters, and living terrain. It is less useful inside sterile vaults or busy cities.

Brine-Scar Truth

School: Brine Rites
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Blood, Omen, Wound
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Touch
Test: Wild Magic
Resist: Resolve if the subject is unwilling

Effect:
The caster reads a scar, wound, blood mark, or old injury through brine and pain. On a success, they learn one true thing about how the wound was made: weapon, creature, magic, betrayal, accident, pressure, poison, or sacrifice.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the caster also learns one emotional truth tied to the wound, such as fear, rage, grief, loyalty, or shame.

Failure:
The wound answers with pain instead of truth. The subject suffers distress, and the caster takes −10 Disadvantage on their next Insight, Medicine, or Wild Magic Test.

Special:
This spell is not gentle. Some cultures consider it invasive unless performed with consent.

Wake the Safe Bloom

School: Greenwater Rites
Skill: Wild Magic
Tags: Ritual, Healing, Plant, Cleansing
Cost: 2 Essence
Time: One scene
Range: Nearby living growth

Test: Wild Magic
Resist: None

Effect:
The caster wakes a small patch of safe medicinal growth from nearby kelp, reef, root, fungus, or soft coral. On a success, the growth produces enough usable material for one Herbalism preparation, simple poultice, calming wrap, or cleansing wash.

DoS:
At 10+ DoS, the preparation is especially clean or potent and may remove one minor obstacle to treatment, such as poor materials, mild contamination, or lack of proper dressing.

Failure:
The growth produces nothing useful, or a similar-looking but irritating substance. A failed use may cause rash, stinging, or ruined treatment materials.

Special:
This spell cannot create rare miracle medicines on demand. It creates basic safe healing material from living terrain.

Chapter Ten: Healing & Recovery

In the Drowned Realms, wounds do not vanish because a fight ends. Saltwater enters cuts. Coral fragments break under the skin. Venoms linger. Pressure stress leaves bruises deep in the body. A Protagonist who survives danger still needs treatment.

Healing is handled in two stages: **Stabilization** and **Recovery**.

Stabilization keeps a wound from getting worse. Recovery reduces the Wound state.

Stabilization

A character with an untreated Wound may need immediate care. This is handled with **Medicine**.

Stabilization is usually performed during or shortly after a dangerous scene.

A successful Medicine Test can stabilize a wounded character and prevent the Wound from worsening due to bleeding, shock, infection, pressure trauma, or contamination.

Suggested modifiers:

- **+10** with proper tools, clean water, and time
- **+10** if aided by suitable Herbalism or Alchemy preparations
- **−10** in poor light, silt, panic, or cramped space
- **−20** during combat, pressure failure, venom spread, or active contamination
- **−30** if the patient is trapped, drowning, mutating, or being moved through hostile water

Stabilization does not reduce the Wound state by itself. A Severe Wound remains Severe. A Moderate Wound remains Moderate. Stabilization keeps the character alive and makes later recovery possible.

If no Medicine is available, the Director may allow a desperate Stabilization attempt with Herbalism, Alchemy, Wild Magic, or Survival, depending on the situation. This can stop the immediate crisis, but it does not replace proper medical care.

Recovery Tests

A **Recovery Test** is made during rest, camp, base time, settlement care, or downtime. It represents treatment, cleaning, binding, pressure relief, rest

planning, infection control, and careful monitoring.

A Recovery Test uses **Medicine**.

On a success, one Wound state improves by one step:

- **Critical Wound → Severe Wound**
- **Severe Wound → Moderate Wound**
- **Moderate Wound → Light Wound**
- **Light Wound → recovered**

A single Recovery Test normally treats one Wound. If the character has several Wounds, each must be treated separately unless the Director allows otherwise during extended downtime.

When Recovery Tests Can Be Made

A Recovery Test requires a safe or semi-safe place to rest. This may be a camp, Shellhold infirmary, Kelpway healing grove, Arkborn recovery chamber, Coral Court clinic, Leviathan-Tide route shelter, or other secure location.

A Recovery Test should not normally be made while traveling through active danger, fighting, fleeing, or exploring a hostile ruin.

Suggested timing:

- **After a full rest period** in a safe or controlled location
- **Once per downtime interval** for each significant Wound
- **After proper treatment** by a character using Medicine
- **After the wounded character has been stabilized**

The Director may allow a Recovery Test sooner if the Protagonist has exceptional care, rare medicines, Wild Magic support, or a specialized healing location.

Recovery Test Modifiers

Apply modifiers based on care, conditions, tools, and severity.

Favorable Conditions

- **+10** proper medical tools and clean treatment space
- **+10** safe camp, infirmary, or stable base
- **+20** dedicated healer, good supplies, and full rest
- **+20** specialized healing location such as a Kelpway medicine bed, Shellhold infirmary, or Arkborn recovery chamber

Unfavorable Conditions

- **−10** poor shelter, cold water, bad light, or limited supplies
- **−10** patient moved too soon after treatment
- **−10** contaminated wound, coral rash, or minor venom
- **−20** active infection, pressure trauma, serious venom, or untreated parasite exposure
- **−20** hostile travel, unsafe camp, or repeated interruption
- **−30** arcane mutation, cursed wound, abyssal contamination, or old-world relic injury

Degree of Success

Degree of Success can improve recovery.

- **1 DoS**: The Wound improves by one state.
- **5+ DoS**: The Wound improves by one state, and the patient clears one minor related penalty such as pain, stiffness, fever, or fatigue.
- **10+ DoS**: The Wound improves by one state, and the next Recovery Test for that patient gains +10 Advantage.

The Director should avoid letting one Recovery Test erase several serious injuries unless the scene represents extended downtime, rare resources, or powerful magic.

Degree of Failure

Failure means the Wound does not improve. It may also create complications.

- **1 DoF**: No improvement.
- **5+ DoF**: No improvement, and the patient suffers a complication such as fever, reopened bleeding, pressure ache, infection, or exhaustion.
- **10+ DoF**: The Wound worsens by one state, or the Director advances an Infection, Exposure, Mutation, or Crisis Clock.

A failed Recovery Test does not always mean the healer made a mistake. The wound may simply be worse than it looked. The water may be bad. The patient may be too weak. Something may be growing where it should not.

Healing Support Skills

Other Skills can support a Recovery Test, but they do not usually replace Medicine.

Recovery During Travel

Travel recovery is possible, but harder.

A wounded character resting in a moving skiff, convoy, route camp, or beast platform may attempt Recovery only if the Director agrees the situation is stable enough.

Suggested modifiers:

- **−10** if traveling through ordinary risk
- **−20** if traveling through hostile water, dangerous routes, or bad weather
- **−30** if fleeing, pursued, exposed to mutation, or crossing extreme depth

The Director may allow Kelpway route shelters, Shellhold medical sleds, Arkborn sealed recovery pods, or Leviathan-Tide rest platforms to reduce these penalties.

Recovery and Wound Stacking

If the game uses Wound stacking, recovery should reduce the current Wound state before removing lesser marks. For example, if multiple Light Wounds have escalated into a Moderate Wound, a successful Recovery Test may reduce the Moderate Wound to a Light Wound. That remaining Light Wound must still be recovered later.

The Director should keep the fiction clear. A character is not erasing numbers. They are healing torn muscle, cracked shell, coral cuts, pressure bruising, venom damage, or arcane stress.

Example

A Shellguard suffers a Severe Wound from an Akhul bite. The wound is stabilized in the field with Medicine at −20 because the treatment happens in poor light while the group is still in dangerous water.

Later, the Shellguard reaches a Shellhold infirmary. The healer attempts a Recovery Test with Medicine.

The Director grants:

- **+10** for proper medical tools
- **+10** for a stable infirmary
- **+10** for Alchemy antiseptic wash
- **−10** because the wound is contaminated by deepwater bacteria

The final modifier is **+20**.

On a success, the Severe Wound becomes a Moderate Wound. On 10+ DoS, the Shellguard also clears the pain penalty from the bite. On failure, the wound remains Severe. On 15+ DoF, infection sets in or an Exposure Clock advances.

Design Use in Play

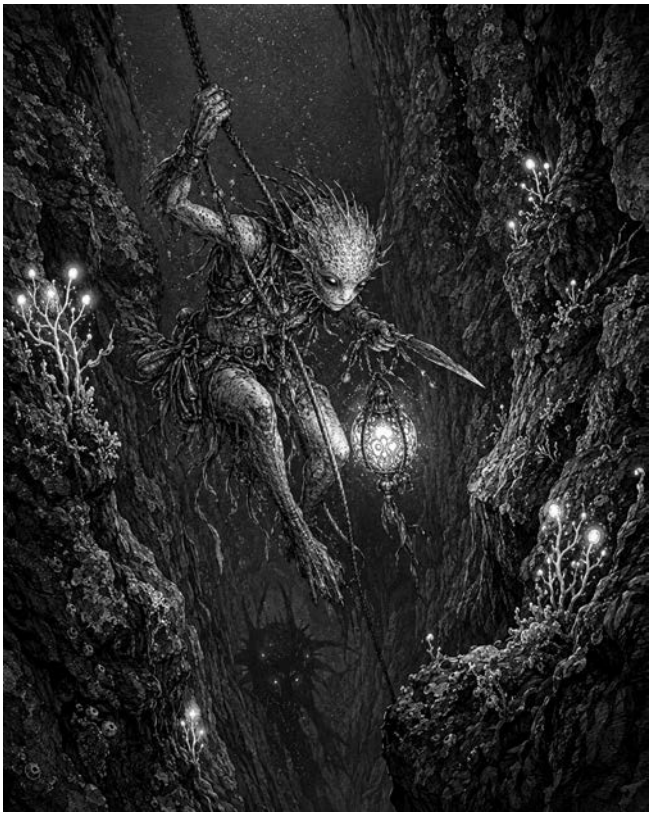
Recovery Tests give downtime weight. A Protagonist may survive the fight but still need shelter, medicine, allies, and time. The Director can use recovery to create choices without punishing the player unfairly.

Do they risk travel while wounded?
Do they spend time in a Shellhold infirmary while enemies move?
Do they trust a Kelpway healer from a rival clan?
Do they use Wild Magic on a wound that may be mutating?
Do they open an Arkborn recovery chamber that has not been used in centuries?

In Undine, healing is not only recovery.

It is another kind of story.

Chapter Eleven: Foraged Materials



The Drowned Realms are alive with useful things. Some heal. Some burn. Some glow. Some poison. Some should never be cut from the place where they grow.

Foraged Materials are natural, semi-natural, or arcane resources gathered from reefs, kelp forests, silt beds, vent fields, living beasts, mollusks, fungal growths, abyssal waters, and old mutation zones. They are used by healers, alchemists, crafters, hunters, mystics, and smugglers.

Most materials can be gathered with **Forage**. Some may also require **Herbalism**, **Creature Lore**, **Depth Lore**, **Currentcraft**, or **Survival** when the gathering is dangerous. The Director should call for a Test only when the material is difficult to find, risky to harvest, contested, unstable, or important to the story.

Rarity and Forage Modifiers

Rarity	Forage Modifier
Common	+10
Uncommon	0
Rare	−10
Very Rare	−20
Forbidden / Hazardous	−30

The modifier applies to the most common gathering method. A character may reduce risk through preparation, local guides, proper tools, or good information.

A material may be easy to find but dangerous to harvest. In that case, the Forage Test locates it, while another Skill may be required to collect it safely.

Material Entry Format

Each entry includes:

Material Name
Type: Plant, Coral, Fish, Mollusk, Fungus, Beast, Mineral-Organic, or Arcane
Rarity: Common, Uncommon, Rare, Very Rare, or Forbidden / Hazardous
Forage Modifier: The usual modifier to locate or gather the material
Region: Common regions or Depth Bands
Uses: Common Skills or crafts that use the material
Description: What the material is and why it matters
Known Preparations: Common items, medicines, reagents, or craft uses

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Foraged Materials

Amber Kelp

Type: Plant
Rarity: Common
Forage Modifier: +10
Region: Sunlit Skin, Greenways, Blue Realms
Uses: Herbalism, Forage, Crafting: Living Materials

Amber Kelp grows in warm greenwater and shallow reef margins. Its fronds are gold-brown and slightly translucent. When cut cleanly, they release a mild soothing sap.

Kelpway healers use Amber Kelp as a base for many field dressings. It is easy to gather, but poor cutting can bruise the fronds and spoil the sap.

Known Preparations: Kelp Poultice, Bitterroot Dressing, soft wound wraps

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Bitterroot

Type: Plant
Rarity: Uncommon
Forage Modifier: 0
Region: Greenways, root mats, reef-edge growth
Uses: Herbalism, Wild Magic, Medicine

Bitterroot grows in dark knots beneath floating plant beds. Its outer skin is dull green or brown. The inner flesh is sharp yellow and painfully bitter.

It reduces swelling and helps draw heat from infected wounds. Kelpway healers also use it in rites that demand pain before healing.

Known Preparations: Bitterroot Dressing, Green Fever Salve, Wound-Root Offering reagent

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Black Lantern Jelly

Type: Beast
Rarity: Rare
Forage Modifier: −10
Region: Dim Roads, Black Reaches
Uses: Alchemy, Wild Magic, Crafting: Living Materials

Black Lantern Jellies drift in cold water where light fades. Their bodies glow faintly blue, violet, or white through a dark outer veil. Harvesters collect their light sacs after stunning them with careful pressure pulses.

The sacs can be used to make shuttered lights, omen vessels, and low-glow alchemical mixtures. If ruptured, they stain the water and attract predators.

Known Preparations: Glowgel Lamp, omen bowls, low-light marker vials

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Bloodbrine Sponge

Type: Animal / Filter Growth
Rarity: Rare
Forage Modifier: −10
Region: Blue Realms, Dim Roads, old battle sites
Uses: Medicine, Alchemy, Brine Rites

Bloodbrine Sponge grows where old wounds soaked into stone or reef. It is deep red, soft, and warm to the touch. Some healers value it. Others refuse to handle it.

When prepared correctly, it helps bind bleeding and preserve tissue. When prepared poorly, it can spread fever or strange dreams.

Known Preparations: Sealing Gel, Blood-in-the-Water Vow reagent, emergency clotting pads

Blueglass Urchin

Type: Beast
Rarity: Uncommon
Forage Modifier: 0
Region: Blue Realms, Glass Fields, reef shelves
Uses: Alchemy, Trapmaking, Thrown Weapons

Blueglass Urchins have clear spines with blue cores. The spines break easily and retain a mild numbing toxin. Ruin-Breakers often hate them because they gather in cracks and old steps.

Harvesting them requires care. A careless hand goes numb for hours.

Known Preparations: Numbweed Paste additive, glass spine darts, irritant capsules

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Brine Pearl

Type: Mollusk / Pearl
Rarity: Rare
Forage Modifier: −10
Region: Blue Realms, Coral Courts, old reef beds
Uses: Alchemy, Pearl Divination, Scholar, Trade

Brine Pearls form inside old mollusks exposed to heavy salt and faint magic. They are cloudy white, gray, or pale blue. Some contain tiny dark swirls that move when held near a spell.

They are used in memory work, legal rites, and stabilizing alchemical solutions. False Brine Pearls are common in markets.

Known Preparations: Pearl record ink, stabilizing salts, witness bead cores

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Calming Moss

Type: Plant
Rarity: Common
Forage Modifier: +10
Region: Greenways, Shellhold walls, shaded reef
Uses: Herbalism, Medicine, Beast Handling

Calming Moss grows in soft blue-green pads along stone, shell, and old coral. It releases a mild scent when crushed. The scent soothes pain and reduces panic in many Bloodtides and small beasts.

It spoils quickly if packed wet for too long. Good healers dry it in thin sheets.

Known Preparations: Rootsleep Draught, beast-soothing paste, panic wraps

---

Coral Ash

Type: Coral / Mineral-Organic
Rarity: Uncommon
Forage Modifier: 0
Region: burned reefs, Redbloom scars, old Coral Court sites
Uses: Alchemy, Reefwork, Medicine

Coral Ash is gathered from dead or burned reef. It is pale gray, pink-white, or dull red. It must be sifted carefully to avoid infected fragments.

Prepared ash can dry wet wounds, mark hidden growth, or help bind other ingredients. Some Coral Court physicians use it in harsh cleansing rites.

Known Preparations: Redbloom Wash, antiseptic powder, reef infection tests

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Darkscale Oil

Type: Fish / Beast
Rarity: Rare

Forage Modifier: −10
Region: Dim Roads, Blackfin waters
Uses: Alchemy, Stealth, Crafting: Living Materials

Darkscale Oil comes from small deepwater fish with black-green scales. The oil clings to skin and gear. It dulls shine and masks scent in cold water.

Blackfin hunters use it with care. In upper waters, it can look suspicious and smell worse as it warms.

Known Preparations: Chameleon Brine, scent masking oil, shadow harness treatment

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Driftseed Pods

Type: Plant
Rarity: Common
Forage Modifier: +10
Region: Greenways, open shallows, seasonal routes
Uses: Forage, Herbalism, Survival

Driftseed Pods float in clusters along gentle currents. Their outer shells are green, tan, or pale gold. The seeds inside are edible when fresh and mildly restorative when boiled.

They are common travel food among the Kelpway Clans. Some route bands mark safe water by tying empty pods to kelp.

Known Preparations: travel mash, mild restorative broth, route marker floats

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Fever Frond

Type: Plant
Rarity: Uncommon
Forage Modifier: 0
Region: warm reefs, vent-adjacent shallows, Greenways
Uses: Herbalism, Medicine

Fever Frond is a red-veined plant that curls when touched. Its sap pulls heat from the body and helps regulate fever. Too much causes chills and shaking.

Healers use it during pressure sickness, brine fever, and infected wounds. It should never be mixed with strong alchemical stimulants.

Known Preparations: Green Fever Salve, cooling wraps, fever draught

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Glassvein Weed

Type: Plant / Arcane
Rarity: Very Rare
Forage Modifier: −20
Region: Glass Fields, relic fractures, mutation zones
Uses: Alchemy, Arcane Lore, Wild Magic

Glassvein Weed has clear stems with bright threads inside. These threads glow when exposed to relic residue or unstable magic. The plant is beautiful and dangerous.

It can reveal arcane contamination, but it may also carry it. Harvesters use bone tongs and sealed tubes.

Known Preparations: arcane detection wash, relic-reactive tincture, mutation test strips

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Greenlung Algae

Type: Plant
Rarity: Common
Forage Modifier: +10

Region: Sunlit Skin, Blue Realms, sheltered pools
Uses: Herbalism, Survival, Medicine

Greenlung Algae grows in soft mats where water is clean and slow. It produces a fresh taste and helps soothe irritated gills and lungs.

It is one of the safest field remedies in the Drowned Realms. Its main weakness is fragility. It dies quickly in dirty containers.

Known Preparations: Siltlung Tea, Clearwater Eye Rinse additive, breath-soothing pads

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Heart-Shell Clam

Type: Mollusk
Rarity: Uncommon
Forage Modifier: 0
Region: Blue Realms, Shellhold farms, reef beds
Uses: Medicine, Alchemy, Food

Heart-Shell Clams have thick red-brown shells and pale nourishing meat. Their inner membrane can be dried into strong medical film. Shellhold infirmaries use it often.

The clams filter water aggressively. In tainted areas, they may concentrate poison.

Known Preparations: wound film, restorative broth, sealing gel base

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Inkcap Fungus

Type: Fungus
Rarity: Uncommon
Forage Modifier: 0
Region: ruins, shaded vaults, Kelpway root beds
Uses: Alchemy, Deception, Stealth

Inkcap Fungus grows in soft black fans. When crushed, it releases dark pigment that spreads quickly in water. It stains skin and cloth for days.

Alchemists refine it into smoke-like obscuring vials and disguise inks. Some Arkborn archivists hate it for obvious reasons.

Known Preparations: Smokesilt Vial, disguise dye, false seal ink

---

Lantern Roe

Type: Fish / Egg Cluster
Rarity: Rare
Forage Modifier: −10
Region: Blue Realms, Leviathan routes, reef caverns
Uses: Alchemy, Beast Handling, Trade

Lantern Roe glows softly inside clear egg clusters. It is harvested from small schooling fish that spawn near warm currents. Fresh roe gives steady light for a short time.

It is used in portable lights and beast lures. Overharvesting can ruin spawning grounds and anger local guides.

Known Preparations: Glowgel Lamp, lure paste, emergency signal beads

---

Moon-Salt

Type: Mineral-Organic
Rarity: Rare
Forage Modifier: −10
Region: open-water shelves, tide caves, Leviathan routes
Uses: Wild Magic, Alchemy, Moon-Tide Mysteries

Moon-Salt forms in pale crusts where certain currents rise during moon-tide shifts. It shines faintly under low light. Route mystics use it to mark refuges and read subtle tide changes.

It dissolves if handled with warm bare skin. Good harvesters use shell scoops.

Known Preparations: Tide-Marked Refuge reagent, Moonlit Recovery reagent, pressure-calming salts

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Nacre Thread

Type: Mollusk / Fiber
Rarity: Rare
Forage Modifier: −10
Region: Coral Courts, deep shell beds, reef caves
Uses: Crafting: Living Materials, Alchemy, Pearl Divination

Nacre Thread is drawn from rare shell-creatures that spin shining inner fiber. It is strong, smooth, and reflective. Coral Court artisans use it for formal garments and spell foci.

It can also carry minor magical impressions. This makes it valuable in witness tools and delicate wards.

Known Preparations: pearl focus cords, reflective bandages, ritual stitching

---

Numbweed

Type: Plant
Rarity: Common
Forage Modifier: +10
Region: Greenways, reef edges, shallow ruins
Uses: Herbalism, Medicine

Numbweed has pale green leaves with white spots. Crushed leaves dull pain and reduce muscle spasms. Too much can weaken grip and slow reaction.

It is common in field medicine, but experienced healers use it sparingly.

Known Preparations: Numbweed Paste, pain wraps, surgical numbing pad

---

Pale Spore Cups

Type: Fungus
Rarity: Rare
Forage Modifier: −10
Region: root caverns, old Kelpway routes, dead reef pockets
Uses: Herbalism, Alchemy, Wild Magic

Pale Spore Cups grow in clusters like small white bowls. Their spores can calm fever and induce deep sleep. If disturbed carelessly, they may cause hallucinations.

The Kelpway remember whole seasons marked by spore sickness. Responsible harvesters cover the cups before cutting.

Known Preparations: Rootsleep Draught, dream rites, fever sleep powder

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Pearlscale Fish

Type: Fish
Rarity: Common
Forage Modifier: +10
Region: Blue Realms, Coral Court waters, reef shallows
Uses: Food, Alchemy, Trade

Pearlscale Fish are small, bright, and easy to dry. Their scales can be ground into a faintly reflective powder. Coral Court households use them in cosmetics and minor ritual inks.

Alchemists use the powder in light-reactive mixtures.

Known Preparations: reflective dust, weak signal paint, minor illusion reagents

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Pressurecap Mushroom

Type: Fungus
Rarity: Rare
Forage Modifier: −10
Region: Shellhold caverns, pressure shelves, Dim Roads
Uses: Alchemy, Medicine, Survival

Pressurecap Mushrooms are squat gray fungi with thick caps. They grow in cracks where pressure shifts are steady but harsh. When prepared well, they help the body endure depth stress.

Raw Pressurecap causes stomach cramps and numbness.

Known Preparations: Pressure Tonic, depth-rest broth, pressure ache salve

---

Redbloom Filament

Type: Coral / Arcane
Rarity: Forbidden / Hazardous
Forage Modifier: −30
Region: Redbloom sites, corrupted reefs, sealed outbreaks
Uses: Alchemy, Arcane Lore, Wild Magic, forbidden study

Redbloom Filament is harvested from active Redbloom infection. It is bright red, branching, and warm. It pulses faintly when near living tissue.

Most settlements ban its possession without special authority. It can help identify or counter Redbloom, but it can also spread the infection.

Known Preparations: Redbloom Wash, mutation research, forbidden growth catalysts

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Saltglass Shards

Type: Mineral-Organic
Rarity: Uncommon
Forage Modifier: 0
Region: Glass Fields, vent shelves, old relic burns
Uses: Alchemy, Crafting: Hard Materials, Trapmaking

Saltglass forms when mineral-rich brine and old heat harden into brittle translucent plates. Shards range from clear to blue-white. Some hold faint heat or magical residue.

They are useful in capsules, blades, lenses, and flash mixtures.

Known Preparations: GlassFlash Capsule, cutting flakes, light-splitting powder

---

Siltworm Castings

Type: Beast Byproduct
Rarity: Common
Forage Modifier: +10
Region: silt plains, Dim Roads, old ruins
Uses: Herbalism, Alchemy, Forage

Siltworms leave fine curled castings after feeding through mineral-rich sediment. Fresh castings are

pale gray and soft. Dried castings bind moisture and toxins.

They are humble but useful. Many healers keep a small pouch for wound drying and filtration.

Known Preparations: drying powder, toxin binder base, field filter packs

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Silver Gillweed

Type: Plant
Rarity: Uncommon
Forage Modifier: 0
Region: Blue Realms, current edges, reef shelves
Uses: Herbalism, Medicine, Currentcraft

Silver Gillweed grows in thin waving fans. It helps irritated gills recover after bad water, smoke-silt, or pressure shock. It has a clean metallic taste.

Divers chew it before entering poor water, though too much causes dizziness.

Known Preparations: Clearwater Eye Rinse, Siltlung Tea, gill-soothing strips

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Soft Coral Milk

Type: Coral / Organic Fluid
Rarity: Rare
Forage Modifier: −10
Region: Coral Courts, reef nurseries, living city walls
Uses: Herbalism, Reefwork, Medicine

Soft Coral Milk is a pale fluid secreted by certain living coral beds. It helps damaged reef regrow. In small amounts, it can soothe burns, cuts, and coral rash.

Harvesting it from court reefs without permission is a serious offense.

Known Preparations: coral rash wash, soft healing salve, reef repair paste

---

Thornfrond Barbs

Type: Plant
Rarity: Uncommon
Forage Modifier: 0
Region: Greenways, hostile kelp routes, reef margins
Uses: Trapmaking, Thrown Weapons, Alchemy

Thornfrond grows in long dark strips with small hooked barbs. The barbs are painful and often carry mild irritants. Kelpstalkers use them in snares and darts.

When dried, they become brittle. Fresh barbs are better for traps.

Known Preparations: thorn snares, irritant darts, pain powder

---

Ultraviolet Anemone

Type: Animal / Reef Growth
Rarity: Very Rare
Forage Modifier: −20
Region: deep reefs, dim coral caves, old Court sites
Uses: Alchemy, Formal Magic, Arcane Lore

Ultraviolet Anemones are almost invisible in ordinary light. Under certain lamps, they glow in violet patterns. Their tendrils react to hidden magical residue.

They are prized by alchemists who make detection washes and stealth-breaking compounds.

Known Preparations: arcane reveal wash, invisibility-breaking dust, spell residue dye

Veilscale Skin

Type: Fish / Beast
Rarity: Rare
Forage Modifier: −10
Region: Dim Roads, reef shadows, Black Reaches border
Uses: Alchemy, Stealth, Crafting: Living Materials

Veilscale creatures have skin that reflects nearby color and light. They are hard to catch and harder to skin cleanly. The best material comes from naturally shed patches.

Alchemists use Veilscale to make camouflage mixtures. Crafters use it in stealth cloaks and mask veils.

Known Preparations: Chameleon Brine, shadow veils, color-shifting wraps

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Ventblood Coral

Type: Coral / Mineral-Organic
Rarity: Very Rare
Forage Modifier: −20
Region: vent fields, Shellhold Deepworks sites, hot reefs
Uses: Alchemy, Crafting: Hard Materials, Deepworks

Ventblood Coral grows near heat vents and mineral flows. It is dark red, black, or orange, and warm long after being cut. Its core contains heat-reactive mineral threads.

Shellhold crafters use it in pressure tools and vent systems. Alchemists use powdered Ventblood in heat and flash compounds.

Known Preparations: fireburst gel, heat sealant, vent-reactive powder

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White Silt Lotus

Type: Plant
Rarity: Very Rare
Forage Modifier: −20
Region: quiet silt basins, sacred Kelpway hollows, old grave waters
Uses: Herbalism, Wild Magic, Medicine

White Silt Lotus grows from still silt in places of old death or deep calm. Its pale petals close when touched. The root can ease pain and support difficult recovery.

Many Kelpway clans consider it sacred. Taking it without permission may bring exile or worse.

Known Preparations: Moonlit Recovery reagent, deep pain draught, grave-water poultice

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Wound-Eel Bile

Type: Beast
Rarity: Rare
Forage Modifier: −10
Region: Dim Roads, predator routes, silt tunnels
Uses: Alchemy, Medicine, Trapmaking

Wound-Eels feed on injured prey and carrion. Their bile is foul, green-black, and potent. When refined, it can help break down dead tissue and prevent rot.

Unrefined bile is dangerous. It can burn healthy flesh.

Known Preparations: surgical cleansing drops, corpse-water neutralizer, corrosive bait

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Yellow Ventmoss

Type: Fungus / Plantlike Growth
Rarity: Uncommon
Forage Modifier: 0
Region: vent fields, warm stone, Shellhold lower chambers
Uses: Alchemy, Herbalism, Survival

Yellow Ventmoss grows in warm patches near heat flow. It stores warmth and releases it slowly when packed into cloth or shell. It also has mild stimulant properties.

Workers use it during cold repairs and long watches. Too much can cause shaking.

Known Preparations: warmth pads, pressure tonic additive, work-stimulant chew

Chapter Twelve: Herbalism & Alchemy

The Drowned Realms offer many cures. They also offer many ways to die by trusting the wrong one.

Herbalists and alchemists both work with gathered materials, but they do not practice the same craft. An herbalist knows the living body of the sea. They prepare poultices, salves, washes, wraps, teas, and natural treatments that help a patient survive long enough to heal. Their work is field-useful, practical, and often humble.

An alchemist refines. They reduce, distill, bind, suspend, ignite, seal, and concentrate. Their work produces portable items with sharper effects. An alchemical preparation may stabilize a wound, blind a predator, create light, dissolve a lock, or hide a traveler from sight. It may also burst, spoil, poison, or react poorly to pressure.

Both crafts matter in Undine.

Neither should replace Medicine. A Recovery Test still uses **Medicine**. Herbalism and Alchemy support recovery by creating specific preparations that remove obstacles, prevent worsening, stabilize emergencies, manage conditions, or make treatment possible.

Using Preparations

Each preparation lists its usual **Skill**, **Materials**, **Preparation Time**, **Use**, and **Effect**.

The Director may require a Skill Test to craft a preparation when:

- the materials are poor or substituted;
- the character works in the field;
- the preparation is rare or unstable;
- time is short;
- the environment is unsafe;
- the item is being made in quantity;
- failure would create an interesting complication.

If the character has proper tools, correct materials, and downtime, simple preparations may not require a roll.

Preparation Modifiers

Use these common modifiers when a Test is needed.

- **+10** clean workspace, correct tools, and fresh materials

- **+10** strong cultural familiarity with the preparation
- **−10** rushed work or poor light
- **−10** substitute materials
- **−20** field preparation under danger
- **−20** contaminated, spoiled, or unstable ingredients
- **−30** arcane contamination, pressure failure, or hazardous forbidden materials

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Shelf Life

Herbalism preparations are usually less stable. They are best used fresh, though some can be dried, wrapped, or sealed.

Alchemy preparations last longer if sealed properly. Most are carried in shell vials, pressure-glass ampoules, pearl-stoppered tubes, vent-metal capsules, or resin-coated containers.

The Director may rule that old or damaged preparations lose effect, impose Disadvantage, or create complications.

Herbalism Preparations

Herbalism preparations use natural materials with minimal refinement. They are usually applied by hand, brewed simply, wrapped around a wound, or taken during rest. They are safer than alchemical preparations, but less dramatic.

Bitterroot Dressing

Skill: Herbalism
Materials: Bitterroot, Amber Kelp, Siltworm Castings
Preparation Time: One scene
Use: Applied to a stabilized Wound before travel
Effect:
A Bitterroot Dressing keeps a stabilized Wound from worsening during ordinary travel for one journey segment or until the next major danger. It is painful but effective. The dressing draws heat from the injury, binds minor seepage, and keeps exposed tissue from reacting badly to saltwater.

If the patient is dragged through hostile water, exposed to venom, suffers pressure trauma, or takes another Wound, the dressing may fail.

Special:
Bitterroot Dressing is common among Kelpway healers and practical Shellhold field medics.

Kelp Poultice

Skill: Herbalism
Materials: Amber Kelp, Numbweed, Soft Coral Milk
Preparation Time: One scene
Use: Applied to swelling, bruising, coral rash, and minor infection
Effect:
A Kelp Poultice reduces swelling, pain, coral rash, and minor surface infection. It can remove one minor treatment obstacle caused by irritation, inflammation, or rash. It may also allow a patient to rest comfortably enough for a later Recovery Test.

It does not stabilize a serious Wound by itself.

Special:
A poor-quality poultice may smell bad, loosen too early, or attract small scavengers.

Venom Binder Wrap

Skill: Herbalism
Materials: Siltworm Castings, Silver Gillweed, Blueglass Urchin spine shavings
Preparation Time: One scene
Use: Wrapped around a bite, sting, or venom wound
Effect:
A Venom Binder Wrap delays or weakens venom effects. When applied quickly, it may prevent a poison or venom Clock from advancing once, or remove a minor venom-related penalty from later treatment.

Against strong venom, the Director may require Medicine or Endurance after application.

Special:
Venom Binder Wraps are most effective when the creature type is known. Creature Lore may identify the correct treatment.

Green Fever Salve

Skill: Herbalism
Materials: Fever Frond, Bitterroot, Calming Moss
Preparation Time: One scene
Use: Applied during rest or fever treatment
Effect:
Green Fever Salve lowers fever, reduces chills, and helps a patient rest despite brine sickness, pressure fever, or infected wounds. It may make a Recovery Test possible when fever would otherwise delay treatment.

It does not cure disease alone.

Special:
Too much Fever Frond can cause shivering, weak grip, and strange dreams.

Siltlung Tea

Skill: Herbalism
Materials: Greenlung Algae, Silver Gillweed, Driftseed Pods
Preparation Time: One scene
Use: Drunk or absorbed during rest
Effect:
Siltlung Tea helps clear bad water irritation, smoke-silt exposure, stinging spores, or mild inhaled toxins from gills and lungs. It may remove a minor penalty caused by coughing, gill burn, dizziness, or irritant exposure.

It is often used after travel through siltstorms, smoke-vials, fungal clouds, or polluted ruins.

Special:
The tea must be prepared in clean water. Dirty water ruins it.

Redbloom Wash

Skill: Herbalism
Materials: Coral Ash, Glassvein Weed, trace Redbloom Filament
Preparation Time: One scene
Use: Applied to suspected Redbloom infection or corrupted reef injury
Effect:
Redbloom Wash reveals or slows minor Redbloom infection. It causes infected tissue, coral fragments, or reef growth to flush red for a few breaths. If the infection is minor, the wash may keep it from worsening until proper treatment can begin.

It cannot cure a major outbreak.

Special:
Because it uses trace Redbloom Filament, many settlements restrict this preparation. Possession may require permission from healers, wardens, or civic authorities.

Softfrond Splint

Skill: Herbalism
Materials: Amber Kelp, Thornfrond stripped of barbs, Heart-Shell membrane
Preparation Time: One scene
Use: Wrapped around strained limbs, cracked fins, sprains, or minor breaks
Effect:
A Softfrond Splint supports broken, strained, or weakened limbs and fins. It may remove a minor movement penalty during careful travel or allow the patient to move without worsening the injury.

The patient still suffers normal Wound effects. The splint only keeps the injury stable.

Special:
A Softfrond Splint must be fitted to the patient's body shape. Shellborn, Leviathan-Tide, and Abyssal forms may require different wrapping patterns.

Numbweed Paste

Skill: Herbalism
Materials: Numbweed, Calming Moss, Blueglass Urchin spine dust
Preparation Time: One scene
Use: Applied to a painful area before treatment or action
Effect:
Numbweed Paste reduces pain for one scene. It may allow a patient to endure treatment, interrogation, travel, or a necessary physical action without suffering one minor pain-based penalty.

It does not remove the Wound. It only dulls the pain.

Special:
Overuse can weaken grip or slow reaction. The Director may impose −10 Disadvantage on delicate hand work if too much is applied.

Clearwater Eye Rinse

Skill: Herbalism
Materials: Greenlung Algae, Silver Gillweed, Ultraviolet Anemone trace fluid
Preparation Time: One scene
Use: Rinsed over eyes, gills, or sensory membranes
Effect:
Clearwater Eye Rinse removes minor penalties from irritant silt, stinging spores, salt burn, smoke-vials, or glare. It is often used by scouts, healers, abyssal travelers entering bright water, and ruin explorers.

The rinse can also help reveal faint arcane residue if made with Ultraviolet Anemone trace fluid, though this does not replace Arcane Lore.

Special:
If made poorly, it stings badly and may blur vision for a scene.

Rootsleep Draught

Skill: Herbalism
Materials: Pale Spore Cups, Calming Moss, Driftseed Pods
Preparation Time: One scene

Use: Taken before rest
Effect:
Rootsleep Draught helps a patient sleep under stressful conditions. It may allow rest despite pain, anxiety, mild fever, grief, or route exhaustion. It is useful before a Recovery Test, especially when the patient is safe but unable to calm down.

It does not force sleep in an unwilling target unless the Director permits and calls for a Contest.

Special:
Too strong a dose can cause hallucinations, strange dreams, or delayed waking.

Alchemy Preparations

Alchemy preparations are refined, sealed, and portable. They are more potent than Herbalism preparations, but also more dangerous. Many require careful containers and proper dosing.

Some alchemical items have effects that seem almost magical. This is expected in the Drowned Realms. The difference is that alchemy bottles the effect before use. Magic casts it in the moment.

Sealing Gel

Skill: Alchemy
Materials: Bloodbrine Sponge, Heart-Shell membrane, Soft Coral Milk, Coral Ash
Preparation Time: One hour
Use: Applied directly to an open Wound
Effect:
Sealing Gel can stabilize a Wound in an emergency if applied quickly. It seals bleeding, blocks dirty water, and stiffens around the injury. If the Director allows, it may stabilize a Light or Moderate Wound without an immediate Medicine Test.

A Severe Wound still requires Medicine, but Sealing Gel may prevent it from worsening long enough to reach care.

Special:
Sealing Gel hardens badly if exposed to strong heat or corrupted water.

Restorative Draught

Skill: Alchemy
Materials: Driftseed Pods, Heart-Shell Clam, White Silt Lotus, Greenlung Algae
Preparation Time: One hour
Use: Taken during rest or treatment
Effect:
A Restorative Draught allows a patient to attempt a Recovery Test sooner than normal, provided the Wound has been stabilized and the patient has a safe place to rest. It does not grant automatic healing.

The draught restores enough strength for treatment to matter.

Special:
This item is valuable and often expensive. Poor versions cause nausea and false energy.

Antiseptic Brine

Skill: Alchemy
Materials: Coral Ash, Wound-Eel Bile, Siltworm Castings, Silver Gillweed
Preparation Time: One hour
Use: Poured over wounds, tools, bindings, or treatment surfaces
Effect:

Antiseptic Brine removes contamination as a treatment obstacle. It can clear dirty water, corpse-brine, coral grit, minor rot, or ordinary infection risk from a wound before Medicine is attempted.

It cannot cleanse arcane mutation, major Redbloom, or relic contamination by itself.

Special:
It burns. Patients often need to be restrained or warned.

Pressure Tonic

Skill: Alchemy
Materials: Pressurecap Mushroom, Yellow Ventmoss, Moon-Salt, Silver Gillweed
Preparation Time: One hour
Use: Taken before or after pressure stress
Effect:
Pressure Tonic helps the body endure depth stress, pressure ache, or mild compression trauma. For one scene, the user gains +10 Advantage on Tests to resist pressure-related discomfort, dizziness, or minor depth strain.

It can also make rest possible after pressure exposure.

Special:
Overuse causes shaking, numbness, and poor judgment. It does not permit safe travel into extreme depth by itself.

Clarifying Tincture

Skill: Alchemy
Materials: Brine Pearl dust, Greenlung Algae, Fever Frond, Calming Moss
Preparation Time: One hour
Use: Taken during confusion, fever haze, pressure dizziness, or shock
Effect:
Clarifying Tincture clears confusion, fever haze, pressure dizziness, or shock for one scene. It may remove one minor penalty affecting Concentration, Insight, Investigation, Formal Magic, Wild Magic, or Medicine.

It does not cure the underlying condition.

Special:
Some Arkborn scholars use this before dangerous relic study. This is not always wise.

Smokesilt Vial

Skill: Alchemy
Materials: Inkcap Fungus, Siltworm Castings, Saltglass Shards
Preparation Time: One hour
Use: Thrown, cracked, or opened underwater
Effect:
A Smokesilt Vial releases a dark expanding cloud that obscures sight in a nearby area for a short time. Characters inside or behind the cloud may gain +10 Advantage on Stealth, Escape, or repositioning Tests if the cloud meaningfully blocks sight.

Strong current disperses it quickly.

Special:
The cloud may also alert guards, predators, or anyone watching for alchemical tricks.

Glassflash Capsule

Skill: Alchemy
Materials: Saltglass Shards, Pearlscale Fish powder, Ventblood Coral powder

Preparation Time: One hour
Use: Thrown or cracked near a target
Effect:
A Glassflash Capsule releases a sharp burst of refracted light and mineral shock. It may impose −10 Disadvantage on the next Awareness, attack, defense, or pursuit Test of creatures that rely on sight.

It is especially useful against brightwater creatures, predators, and guards not expecting it.

Special:
Abyssal Kin and other light-sensitive targets may suffer stronger narrative effects at the Director's discretion. The item is less effective in total darkness unless paired with a light source.

Chameleon Brine

Skill: Alchemy
Materials: Veilscale Skin, Darkscale Oil, Nacre Thread, Pearlscale Fish powder
Preparation Time: One hour
Use: Applied to skin, armor, and gear
Effect:
Chameleon Brine clings to the user and reflects nearby color, shadow, and motion. For one scene, the user gains +20 Advantage on Stealth Tests while moving slowly and carefully through reef, kelp, silt, shadow, or dim water.

Sudden movement, bright light, injury, violent current, or direct touch may reduce the benefit or end the effect.

Special:
This is not true invisibility. A careful observer, scent-tracking creature, pressure-sensitive hunter, or magical detection can still reveal the user.

Glowgel Lamp

Skill: Alchemy
Materials: Black Lantern Jelly sac, Lantern Roe, Brine Pearl dust
Preparation Time: One hour
Use: Sealed in a shell lamp, vial, bead, or marker
Effect:
Glowgel produces steady portable light for a scene or journey segment, depending on container size. It can illuminate nearby water, mark a route, signal allies, or power certain low-light tools.

The light may be shuttered or colored with additional materials.

Special:
Open Glowgel can attract predators, curious beasts, or abyssal attention in dark water.

Corrosive Salt Ampoule

Skill: Alchemy
Materials: Wound-Eel Bile, Saltglass Shards, Ventblood Coral powder, Coral Ash
Preparation Time: One hour
Use: Cracked against bindings, locks, coral growth, soft armor, or organic barriers
Effect:
A Corrosive Salt Ampoule burns through bindings, weak locks, soft coral growth, kelp restraints, leather-like hide, or light organic armor. It can create an opening, weaken an obstacle, or grant a clear chance for Escape, Lockpicking, Crafting, or Blades to finish the work.

It is less effective against heavy shellstone, hard metal, pressure doors, or reinforced Deepworks systems.

Special:
If mishandled, it can burn the user, damage gear,
or release a dangerous cloud in enclosed water.

Chapter Thirteen: Depth, Pressure & Travel

The Drowned Realms are not flat.

A journey may rise toward bright reefs, sink through blue roads, pass into dim cold, and end beside a black trench where the water feels older than memory. Distance matters, but depth matters more. A settlement may be close in miles and deadly in pressure. A route may be short on a map and impossible without gates, guides, or sealed carriers.

Every Bloodtide belongs to the water, but not to the same water. A Kelpway scout is at home in green-lit shallows. A Gloam-Eyed guide moves calmly through deep cold. A Shellborn can endure heavy pressure better than many upper-water folk, but even they know better than to descend into the Hadal Wounds without preparation. The Arkborn preserve old systems that make impossible chambers survivable, yet their bodies still pay attention to pressure, moisture, and air.

This chapter gives the Director simple tools for handling depth, pressure, light, travel, and temporary time outside the water.

The goal is not to turn Undine into a measurement exercise. The goal is to make depth feel real at the table.

Depth Bands

The Drowned Realms are divided into five broad Depth Bands.

1. **Sunlit Skin**
2. **Blue Realms**
3. **Dim Roads**
4. **Black Reaches**
5. **Hadal Wounds**

A Depth Band is not a fixed number of feet. It is a play category. Each band describes pressure, light, settlement, hazards, creatures, and cultural comfort.

Some regions blur the boundaries. A deep trench may cut into the Blue Realms. A glowing reef may brighten part of the Dim Roads. An Arkborn dome may create an artificial pocket where ordinary depth rules are softened. The Director should use the Depth Bands as guides, not chains.

Native Depth

Each Bloodtide has a **Native Depth** or range of comfortable depth. This is where their bodies, senses, and habits work best.

A character suffers no pressure or light penalties in their Native Depth unless another hazard applies.

When a character travels outside their Native Depth, apply the simple rules below.

Simple Depth Mismatch Rules

Use these rules when depth difference matters.

Native Depth

No penalty.

The character is adapted to this band. They may still face local hazards, predators, darkness, disease, or current, but depth itself is not the problem.

One Band Outside Native Depth

No constant penalty. The Director may call for Tests under stress.

A character one band outside comfort can function normally most of the time. Tests may be required during combat, hard travel, rapid movement, injury, spellcasting, or pressure changes.

Two Bands Outside Native Depth

Apply **−10 Disadvantage** to endurance-heavy, movement-heavy, or perception-heavy Tests when depth conditions matter.

This may affect Athletics, Currentcraft, Survival, Concentration, Awareness-based Tests, combat actions, spellcasting, or Recovery attempts. The penalty should apply only when the scene makes it relevant.

Three Bands Outside Native Depth

Apply **−20 Disadvantage** when depth conditions matter. The Director should also consider starting a **Pressure Strain Clock** or **Light Strain Clock**.

The character is now in hostile depth. They can act, but not for long without help.

Four Bands Outside Native Depth

This is extreme mismatch.

The character cannot safely remain without special gear, magic, Deepworks support, a sealed carrier, or a controlled environment. The Director may require immediate Tests, impose Wounds, start a serious Clock, or force retreat.

Shallow and Deep Opposites

The same rules apply in both directions.

A shallow-water Bloodtide descending too deep suffers pressure, cold, darkness, and disorientation.

A deepwater Bloodtide rising too high may suffer glare, thin pressure, warmth, sensory overload, and body stress. Bright water can be as hostile to an Abyssal Kin traveler as black pressure is to a Kelpway scout.

Do not treat depth danger as only “going down.” For some Bloodtides, going upward is just as difficult.

Common Native Depths by Bloodtide

Bloodtide	Common Native Depth
Coral Courts	Sunlit Skin and Blue Realms
Kelpway Clans	Sunlit Skin and upper Blue Realms
Shellhold Bastions	Blue Realms and Dim Roads
Abyssal Kin: Gloam-Eyed	Dim Roads and Black Reaches
Abyssal Kin: Blackfin Houses	Dim Roads and Black Reaches
Abyssal Kin: Ultharic Spawn	Black Reaches and Hadal Wounds
Arkborn	Blue Realms, with strong adaptation to controlled chambers
Leviathan-Tide Peoples	Blue Realms, Dim Roads, and open migration waters

Individual communities may differ. A Kelpway clan that lives near dim root hollows may handle the Dim Roads better than most. An Arkborn line raised in old upper domes may tolerate air chambers longer than others. A Shellborn gate family stationed at a lower watch may be hardened to deep pressure.

Depth Bands in Detail

Sunlit Skin

The Sunlit Skin is the uppermost band of the Drowned Realms. It includes bright reefs, warm shallows, surface ruins, floating kelp mats, greenwater forests, sunken towers near the old surface, and areas where filtered light still reaches clearly.

Light Level

Bright to dappled. Visibility is usually good unless silt, growth, weather, or algae blocks sight.

Pressure Risk

Low for most Bloodtides. Deepwater Bloodtides may find the pressure uncomfortably light. Abyssal Kin may suffer glare, headaches, and sensory strain in bright areas.

Common Bloodtides

Kelpway Clans, Coral Courts, some Leviathan-Tide route camps, shallow Arkborn domes, traders, foragers, and scouts.

Common Hazards

Predators in bright reef channels, stinging growth, territorial reef creatures, sun-bleached ruins, surface weather effects, shallow raiders, unstable old towers, and visibility that leaves travelers exposed.

Travel Difficulty

Usually low to moderate. Routes may be tangled by kelp, crowded by reef, or exposed to weather-driven currents.

Typical Creatures

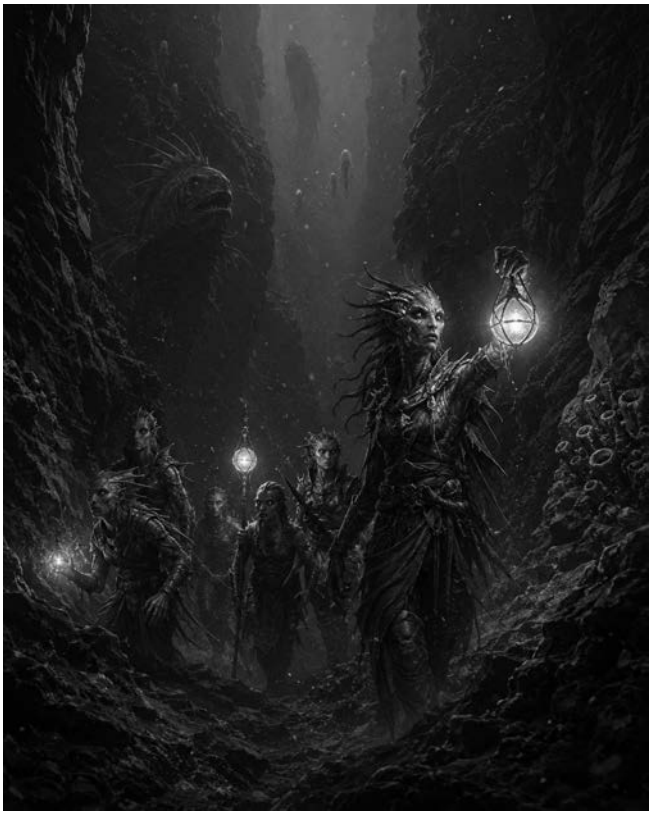
Pearlscale fish, reef gliders, lantern fish, shell crabs, shallow rays, kelp predators, coral grazers, and small swarms.

Ruins and Resources

Shallow towers, old rooflands, upper city remains, reef farms, kelp beds, medicine growths, pearl beds, and surface-broken ruins.

Mechanical Notes

- Bright light may impose **−10 Disadvantage** on Gloam-Eyed or other light-sensitive deepwater characters during stressful scenes.
- Stealth may be harder in open bright water.
- Coral, kelp, and reef cover can offset exposure.
- Sunlit Skin travel is the easiest place to gather many Common foraged materials.



Blue Realms

The Blue Realms are the main civilized depth of Undine. Most trade routes, large settlements, Coral Court cities, Arkborn vault approaches, Shellhold gates, and mixed-Bloodtide markets exist here.

Light Level

Blue, filtered, and moderate. Light may come from the surface, cultivated glow, lantern-jelly glass, reef lamps, or city wards.

Pressure Risk

Comfortable for many Bloodtides. Shallow and deep peoples can often function here with little trouble, though extremes may still feel strain.

Common Bloodtides

Coral Courts, Shellhold Bastions, Arkborn, Kelpway traders, Leviathan-Tide route clans, Blackfin visitors, Gloam-Eyed guides, and mixed communities.

Common Hazards

Political trouble, city predators, pressure gates, reef law, smuggling, mild pressure shifts, toxic runoff, old ruin pockets, and territorial disputes.

Travel Difficulty

Moderate. Routes are known, but not always safe. Gates, tolls, patrols, and current changes matter.

Typical Creatures

Ray mounts, shellback haulers, heart-shell clams, Pearlscale fish, reef predators, trained beasts, route animals, and minor arcane mutants.

Ruins and Resources

Reef cities, trade halls, pressure roads, old plazas, vault entrances, Shellhold gates, coral farms, pearl beds, and Deepworks structures.

Mechanical Notes

- This is the default adventuring band for many campaigns.
- Most Bloodtides can function here without depth penalties.
- Social and political risks are often as important as environmental ones.
- Deepworks and Cartography are especially useful in this band.

Dim Roads

The Dim Roads are colder, darker, and more dangerous. They include descent routes, deep shelves, cold trade corridors, trench approaches, Shellhold lower gates, Blackfin waters, Gloam-Eyed settlements, and old routes between civilization and abyss.

Light Level

Dim to low. Artificial light, bioluminescence, route lamps, and body glow become important.

Pressure Risk

Moderate to high. Shallow-water Bloodtides may suffer pressure strain during stress. Deepwater Bloodtides often become more comfortable here.

Common Bloodtides

Shellhold Bastions, Gloam-Eyed, Blackfin Houses, Arkborn expeditions, Leviathan-Tide route clans, ruin-breakers, smugglers, and guarded convoys.

Common Hazards

Pressure shelves, cold water, silt clouds, predator routes, lost gates, abyssal signs, corrupted ruins, hard descents, and isolation.

Travel Difficulty

High. Guides, current sense, route marks, and pressure planning matter.

Typical Creatures

Wound-eels, Black Lantern Jellies, razorbacks, trench predators, deep rays, siltworms, pressure-adapted beasts, and arcane mutants.

Ruins and Resources

Deep gates, old fortifications, cracked domes, lost trade markers, silted roads, vent fields, black coral, pressurecap mushrooms, and relic fragments.

Mechanical Notes

- Shallow Bloodtides two bands above their comfort may suffer **−10 Disadvantage** during pressure-heavy scenes.
- Low light can impose penalties unless characters have light, abyssal senses, or proper tools.
- Siltstorm, Predator Attention, and Route Lost Clocks are common.
- Depth Lore becomes very useful.

Black Reaches

The Black Reaches are abyssal territories. They include deep trenches, blackwater settlements, forbidden routes, cold basalt shelves, old watch gates, hidden abyssal shrines, and places where upper-water maps become unreliable.

Light Level

Dark to near-black. Most visibility comes from bioluminescence, lanterns, abyssal markings, or magical light.

Pressure Risk

High. Shallow and mid-depth Bloodtides require preparation, magic, gear, pressure gates, sealed carriers, or trained guides.

Common Bloodtides

Gloam-Eyed, Blackfin Houses, Ultharic watchers, deep Arkborn expeditions, Shellhold lower guards, abyssal hunters, and rare Leviathan-Tide crossings.

Common Hazards

Extreme pressure, darkness, cold, abyssal predators, Ultharic signs, pressure dreams, deep currents, relic contamination, and hostile local law.

Travel Difficulty

Very high. Most travelers need guides, pressure support, light discipline, and a clear reason to be there.

Typical Creatures

Abyssal predators, darkscale fish, Blackfin mounts, trench hunters, strange jellies, parasitic growths, ancient beasts, and things that avoid light.

Ruins and Resources

Black coral, abyssal pressure stones, sealed trenches, old watch gates, forbidden temples, deep relics, and lost vaults.

Mechanical Notes

- Shallow Bloodtides may suffer **–2 Disadvantage** during pressure-heavy scenes without support.
- Bright light may attract attention.
- Communication may be distorted by pressure and silence customs.
- Abyssal Rites, Depth Lore, Currentcraft, and Survival are crucial.
- Pressure Failure, Arcane Exposure, and Predator Attention Clocks are common.

Hadal Wounds

The Hadal Wounds are not simply deep. They are mythic wounds in the world. They include extreme trenches, black chasms, impossible pressure

zones, ancient sleeping places, deep rupture sites, and regions tied to the oldest mysteries of the Deluge.

Light Level

None, unless created by creatures, relics, magic, or strange geological fire.

Pressure Risk

Extreme. Most Bloodtides cannot survive here without powerful support, sealed carriers, special magic, or unusual adaptation.

Common Bloodtides

Ultharic Spawn, rare abyssal entities, mythic creatures, deep relic guardians, and almost no ordinary travelers.

Common Hazards

Crushing pressure, madness, ancient beings, abyssal magic, relic zones, pressure silence, mutation, impossible currents, and locations that may not obey normal geography.

Travel Difficulty

Mythic. A journey into a Hadal Wound should be an adventure or campaign event.

Typical Creatures

Hadaliths, ancient leviathan parasites, mythic predators, relic-bound creatures, deep spawn, and things older than the Bloodtides.

Ruins and Resources

Forbidden vaults, Ultharic temple-warrens, Deluge scars, old-world containment sites, abyssal minerals, relic engines, and ancient sealed things.

Mechanical Notes

- Extreme mismatch should start a serious **Pressure Strain Clock** or require immediate support.
- Ordinary travel rules may not be enough.
- The Director should use Hadal Wounds sparingly.
- Surviving such places should feel like a major achievement.

Light and Visibility

Light underwater is not just brightness. It is distance, color, distortion, glare, bioluminescence, shadow, and movement.

Use four simple visibility categories.

Clear

The water is well-lit or easy to read. No penalty.

Dim

The water is low-light, blue-shadowed, or cluttered. Characters without proper light, senses, or familiarity may suffer **−10 Disadvantage** on sight-based Tests.

Dark

The water is black, silted, heavily shaded, or beyond ordinary sight. Characters may suffer **−20 Disadvantage** on sight-based Tests unless they have abyssal senses, light, magic, or other tools.

Blinded

The character cannot see meaningfully. They must rely on touch, sound, current, pressure,

memory, or other senses. Most sight-based actions fail or require a different Skill approach.

Light-Sensitive Characters

Some deepwater Bloodtides suffer in bright upper waters.

Abyssal Kin, especially Gloam-Eyed, may suffer **−10 Disadvantage** on Awareness, ranged attacks, reading, or delicate work in sudden bright light unless shielded by veils, lenses, hoods, pigment, or dimming tools.

This should not punish them constantly. Use it when bright light is part of the scene.

Darkness-Adapted Characters

Deepwater characters may ignore some low-light penalties. They may also notice pressure shifts, faint glow, and movement better than upper-water travelers.

The Director may grant **+10 Advantage** or remove a darkness penalty when a character's Bloodtide traits, gear, or native depth clearly help.

Pressure and Depth Strain

Pressure should be simple. The Director should call for Tests only when pressure matters to the scene.

Common Tests include:

- **Endurance** to resist bodily strain.
- **Survival** to manage exposure over time.
- **Currentcraft** to move safely through pressure shifts.
- **Depth Lore** to recognize danger before entering it.
- **Deepworks** to use gates, sealed carriers, and pressure systems.
- **Medicine** to treat pressure trauma.
- **Formal Magic** or **Wild Magic** if using spells for protection or adaptation.

Pressure Strain

Pressure Strain may appear as pain, dizziness, gill ache, joint pressure, vision changes, numbness, panic, internal bruising, or weakness.

The Director may impose:

- **−10 Disadvantage** for moderate pressure discomfort;
- **−20 Disadvantage** for serious pressure strain;
- a **Pressure Strain Clock** for ongoing danger;
- a Light, Moderate, or Severe Wound for extreme pressure trauma;
- forced retreat if survival is not plausible.

Rapid Descent

Rapid descent can be dangerous for shallow or mid-depth Bloodtides. The body does not have time to adjust.

Call for a Test when a character drops quickly through bands, is dragged downward, falls into a trench, rides a panicked beast, or enters a pressure gate improperly.

Common Tests:

- Endurance
- Currentcraft
- Survival

- Depth Lore before the descent
- Deepworks for controlled systems

Failure may cause pain, forced movement, panic, Wounds, or a Pressure Strain Clock.

Rapid Ascent

Rapid ascent can be dangerous for deepwater Bloodtides and those coming from high pressure. The body may react badly as pressure lightens.

Call for a Test when a character rises too fast through bands, escapes upward from deep water, is pulled by a beast, exits a pressure carrier, or passes through a faulty gate.

Failure may cause dizziness, rupture pain, disorientation, sensory shock, vomiting, bleeding, or temporary penalties.

Deepwater characters may also suffer from sudden brightness after ascent.

Safe Descent and Ascent

Safe travel between bands uses time, route knowledge, gates, rest stops, and pressure staging.

A safe descent or ascent may require:

- known route;
- guide or Cartography;
- Currentcraft;
- Depth Lore;
- pressure rest points;
- sealed carriers;
- pressure gates;
- magic such as Depth Ward or Chamber Calm;
- proper gear;
- planned pacing.

When the party travels safely, the Director may not need a roll. A Test is needed when danger, time pressure, damage, hostile terrain, or bad information interferes.

Pressure Gates

Pressure gates are structures that help travelers move between depth bands. They may be Shellhold-built, Arkborn-maintained, Coral Court-grown, abyssal-carved, or ancient systems no one fully understands.

A pressure gate may:

- slow descent;
- equalize pressure;

- allow rest between bands;
- regulate water temperature;
- filter bad water;
- seal dangerous routes;
- collect tolls;
- protect settlements;
- hide political control behind safety.

Using a reliable pressure gate usually removes the need for pressure Tests during normal travel.

A damaged gate is another matter.

A failing gate may create a **Gate Collapse Clock**, **Pressure Failure Clock**, or **Current Shift Clock**.

Sealed Carriers

Sealed carriers are vehicles or chambers used to cross hostile pressure zones. They may be descent bells, Arkborn pods, Shellhold carriers, beast-drawn pressure shells, or old-world devices.

A sealed carrier can allow travelers to enter depths they could not otherwise survive. It does not make them safe from everything.

Risks include:

- cracked seals;
- bad air or bad water;
- trapped pressure;
- predator attack;
- Deepworks failure;
- relic system response;
- panic inside confined space;
- inability to exit quickly.

A sealed carrier should make travel possible, not remove danger from the story.

Depth Sickness

Depth sickness occurs when a character remains too long outside their comfortable depth, descends too quickly, ascends too quickly, or suffers pressure shifts while wounded.

Symptoms may include:

- gill pain;
- blood in the mouth or gills;
- numb hands;
- pressure headache;
- dizziness;
- blurred sight;
- joint pain;
- strange dreams;
- panic;
- fatigue;
- internal bruising.

Mild depth sickness may impose **−10 Disadvantage** on physical or focus-heavy Tests.

Serious depth sickness may impose **−20 Disadvantage**, require Medicine, or start a Pressure Strain Clock.

Severe depth sickness may cause a Wound.

Pressure Trauma

Pressure trauma is more serious than depth sickness. It is injury caused by sudden compression, rupture, or pressure shock.

It may result from:

- failed pressure gates;
- rapid descent;
- rapid ascent;
- being crushed by a pressure spell;
- chamber collapse;
- sealed carrier failure;
- entering the wrong depth without preparation;
- combat near pressure systems.

Pressure trauma should be treated with **Medicine**. Herbalism, Alchemy, Wild Magic, and pressure-support gear may help in their specific ways.

A character with untreated pressure trauma may suffer penalties during travel, combat, spellcasting, or Recovery.

Out of Water

The Bloodtides are water-native, but the Drowned Realms include places where characters can leave the water.

These include:

- surface ruins at night or under cloud;
- humid sea caves;
- exposed reef crowns;
- Arkborn air vaults;
- pressure domes;
- Shellhold drying chambers;
- old-world rooms with preserved air;
- leviathan back platforms that breach for short periods;
- ritual chambers where water can be lowered;
- emergency shelters.

Leaving the water should be possible. It should also feel strange.

Dry air pulls at skin and gills. Limbs feel heavy. Sound changes. Light may hurt. Scents become sharp. A character may feel exposed in a way no open water ever made them feel.

Wet Exposure and Dry Exposure

Out-of-water time depends on whether the character remains wet.

Wet Exposure

The character is outside water but remains soaked, misted, wrapped in wet cloth, coated in brine gel, or sheltered in a humid chamber.

Wet exposure is much safer.

Dry Exposure

The character begins to dry out. Skin tightens. Gills ache. Breath becomes difficult. Movement worsens.

Dry exposure is dangerous for most Bloodtides.

Out-of-Water Tolerance by Bloodtide

These are general guidelines. Individual traits, gear, magic, environment, and ancestry may change them.

Bloodtide	Wet Exposure	Dry Exposure	Notes
Kelpway Clans	4–6 hours	30–60 minutes	Can endure wet caves, rain, mist, or soaked wraps fairly well. Dryness is dangerous.
Coral Courts	2–4 hours	30 minutes	Comfortable in damp chambers and court air rooms for short periods. Dry light and heat are harsh.
Shellhold Bastions	2–4 hours	1 hour	Tough bodies endure brief dryness better than most, but gill stress builds.
Arkborn	6–12 hours	2–4 hours	Best adapted to air vaults and controlled chambers. Still need moisture and rest after long exposure.
Abyssal Kin: Gloam-Eyed	1–2 hours	15–30 minutes	Dryness and bright air are both difficult. Humid darkness helps.
Abyssal Kin: Blackfin Houses	1–2 hours	15–30 minutes	Strong in deep water, poor in dry air. Wet wraps help only briefly.
Abyssal Kin: Ultharic Spawn	30–60 minutes	10–15 minutes	Poor out-of-water tolerance unless supported by rites, vessels, or abyssal chambers.
Leviathan-Tide Peoples	2–4 hours	30–60 minutes	Can endure wet open air for short periods, especially in mist, rain, or leviathan-breach conditions. Fin-mantles dry painfully.
Shellkin / mixed forms	Varies	Varies	Use the most appropriate parentage and upbringing. Arkborn or Coral Court ancestry may improve chamber tolerance.

These times assume rest or light activity. Fighting, running, heat, sunlight, injury, or panic can cut tolerance sharply.

Out-of-Water Stress

Once a character exceeds safe exposure, the Director may call for **Endurance** or **Survival** Tests.

Suggested effects:

- **First failure**: −10 Disadvantage from dryness, pain, or breathing strain.
- **Second failure**: the character suffers a Light Wound or cannot continue hard activity.
- **Further failure**: Moderate Wound, collapse, panic, or forced return to water.

If the situation is dangerous, use a **Drying Clock**.

Drying Clock

Suggested Size: d4 or d6
Use When: characters remain out of water too long, enter dry chambers, cross surface ruins, or lose access to wet wraps.

Advances When:

- time passes;
- the character performs hard physical activity;
- the air is hot, dry, or sunlit;

- wet wraps fail;
- the character is wounded;
- the character uses fire, heat, or drying alchemy nearby;
- panic or exertion increases breathing strain.

When It Fills:
The character suffers a Light Wound, serious Disadvantage, collapse, or must return to water immediately. Severe exposure may worsen the effect.

Ways to Slow It:
Wet wraps, brine gel, humid chambers, mist sprayers, water basins, Arkborn air-vault supports, Shellhold moisture rigs, Wild Magic, Medicine, or returning to water.

Surface Light and Sunlight

The surface is not automatically deadly, but sunlight can be dangerous and strange.

Most Bloodtides can endure dim surface exposure better than bright sunlight. Night, storm, mist, cave shadow, or heavy cloud makes surface scenes more plausible.

Direct harsh sunlight may impose:

- **–10 Disadvantage** on Awareness, Concentration, or physical activity;
- faster Drying Clock advancement;
- pain for light-sensitive Bloodtides;
- damage to exposed skin or gills over long periods.

Arkborn tolerate surface-like chambers best, but even they are not ordinary drylanders.

Air Vaults and Dry Chambers

Arkborn air vaults, sealed domes, Shellhold drying chambers, and old-world rooms allow controlled out-of-water scenes.

These places are valuable because they make things possible that are difficult underwater:

- drying or air-curing delicate materials;
- preserving books, scrolls, cloth, and old records;
- performing some alchemical reductions;
- repairing certain relics;
- walking on dry floors;
- using old-world tools;
- encountering preserved furniture, dust, and air;
- hiding things from water-borne senses.

A chamber may be damp, humid, semi-dry, or truly dry.

Humid Chamber

Most Bloodtides can remain longer than normal. Drying Clocks advance slowly or not at all unless exertion is heavy.

Semi-Dry Chamber

Water is absent from the floor or air is partially controlled, but moisture remains. Use Wet Exposure limits.

True Dry Chamber

The space is dry enough to preserve paper, herbs, cloth, dust, or old-world objects. Use Dry Exposure limits.

True dry chambers should feel rare and valuable.

Drying Herbs and Materials

Certain materials can be air-cured in Arkborn domes, Shellhold drying rooms, Coral Court preservation chambers, or old-world vaults. This explains how dried herbs, cured moss sheets, air-preserved fungus, and delicate alchemical reagents exist in the setting.

Most common preservation still uses salt-curing, pressing, silt-drying, brine reduction, vent-curing, or living suspension. But dry chambers are prized because they allow cleaner, finer preparation.

A healer with access to a true dry chamber may produce better-stored materials, rare medicines, or delicate preparations that cannot be made in open water.

The Director may grant **+10 Advantage** to Herbalism or Alchemy preparations that specifically benefit from dry or semi-dry work, if the chamber is safe and properly equipped.

Travel Between Depth Bands

Travel between bands requires route planning. A party may need to consider:

- native depth of each Bloodtide;
- pressure gates;
- light sources;
- food and medicine;
- mounts or vehicles;
- safe rest points;
- local politics;
- predators;
- route tolls;
- current shifts;
- contaminated water;
- time outside native depth.

Use **Cartography** to plan the route.

Use **Currentcraft** to move through water and read immediate conditions.

Use **Depth Lore** to know what dangers belong to the band.

Use **Survival** to endure the journey.

Use **Deepworks** when gates, carriers, pumps, or pressure systems are involved.

Travel Pace

Use simple travel pace categories.

Careful Pace

Slow, quiet, and observant.

Benefits:

- +10 Advantage to avoid hazards, track route signs, spot ambushes, or manage pressure.
- Travel takes longer.
- Supplies may be used more slowly or more carefully.

Steady Pace

Normal travel.

No modifier unless conditions call for one.

Hard Pace

Fast, tiring, and risky.

Benefits:

- arrive sooner;
- escape pursuit;
- beat a Clock.

Costs:

- −10 Disadvantage on some hazard, Survival, or Currentcraft Tests;
- increased risk of pressure strain;
- less chance to forage or notice signs;
- possible fatigue.

Mixed-Bloodtide Travel

A party with several Bloodtides may have different depth needs. This is common in Undine and should be part of the setting's tension.

A Kelpway guide and Gloam-Eyed scout may both be skilled travelers, but neither is comfortable in the other's home waters. An Arkborn scholar may manage air chambers well but struggle in blackwater. A Shellborn may endure pressure but dislike tight living routes. A Leviathan-Tide traveler may suffer in narrow vault corridors.

Mixed parties should use planning, gear, magic, and rest points to keep everyone functional.

The Director should create choices, not constant punishment.

Travel Complications

Use these when a journey needs danger.

1. A pressure gate is closed for political reasons.
2. A current has shifted since the last map.
3. A guide mark has been moved.
4. A predator follows the party's blood trail.
5. The route rises too high for an abyssal ally.
6. The route drops too deep for a shallow-water ally.
7. A siltstorm hides the next landmark.
8. A Shellhold toll crew demands inspection.
9. An Arkborn air chamber has gone silent.
10. A Kelpway route refuses outsiders.
11. A leviathan route crosses the planned path.

12. Redbloom has entered the water ahead.
13. A sealed carrier has a hairline crack.
14. A relic signal distorts Cartography.
15. A dry chamber offers shelter but may contain preserved danger.
16. A route-beast panics before the travelers know why.
17. A current pulls the party toward a forbidden descent.
18. Local law forbids light in the next region.
19. A wounded traveler cannot safely continue.
20. The old map is accurate, but the world has moved.

Final Guidance

Depth should shape Undine without slowing it.

Use pressure when it creates danger. Use light when it changes perception. Use out-of-water exposure when it creates wonder, discomfort, or opportunity. Let Arkborn domes, humid caves, Shellhold drying chambers, and surface ruins open new kinds of scenes.

The sea is home. That does not mean every part of it is safe.

Chapter Fourteen: Equipment & Gear

The Drowned Realms are not kind to careless tools.

A blade that works in open water may drag badly in a reef tunnel. Armor that protects a Shellhold gate guard may drown a Kelpway scout in heavy current. A lantern that saves a party in the Blue Realms may call predators in the Black Reaches. A sealed vial may be worth more than a weapon if it keeps medicine from spoiling.

Equipment in Undine reflects the world that made it. Most gear is shaped from shellstone, coral cement, kelpweave, pressure cloth, vent-metal, bone plate, treated hide, pearl lenses, volcanic glass, salvage bronze, mantlehide, shell fiber, black coral, and lantern-jelly glass. Fine gear is not always beautiful. Useful gear is honored.

Many items are made for specific Bloodtide bodies. Shellborn need wider harnesses and heavier fittings. Leviathan-Tide gear must account for fin-mantles. Abyssal Kin often require low-light coverings or pressure-safe wraps. Kelpway tools are flexible and easy to abandon. Arkborn gear is sealed, labeled, and built around preservation. Coral Court equipment tends to be elegant, but the best court work is still practical beneath the polish.

The Director should treat equipment as part of the setting's texture. A shell knife, a reef saber, a pressure-cloth travel wrap, and a vent-metal gate hammer do more than provide numbers. They tell the table where the character comes from and what kind of problems they are expected to survive.

Currency of the Drowned Realms

Trade in the Drowned Realms is older than any living court. Pearls, tools, food stores, medicine, salvage, favors, and safe passage all have value. Still, most major settlements recognize a common shell-based currency used between Bloodtides.

These trade shells are not ordinary shells. They come from rare mollusks, deep shell beds, old reef deposits, and carefully verified sources. Each has a distinct inner sheen, weight, and pressure-ring pattern that makes counterfeiting difficult. Most are small enough to carry in a pouch, cord, wrist-wrap, or sealed trade tube.

The common name for this currency is **Shells**, though each denomination has its own trade name.

Shell Denominations

Currency	Abbreviation	Value	Description
Pale Shell	PS	1	Small common trade shell used for daily purchases
Rose Shell	RS	10 PS	Pink or red-edged shell used for modest goods and services
Moon Shell	MS	50 PS	Pale luminous shell used for skilled work, travel, medicine, and gear
Crown Shell	CS	250 PS	Rare patterned shell used for serious trade, equipment, relic claims, and legal debts
Sovereign Shell	SS	1,250 PS	Very rare deep shell used for major purchases, ransom, vault rights, vehicles, and noble exchange

Most common folk deal in Pale Shells and Rose Shells. Adventurers, merchants, healers, craft houses, court envoys, and smugglers often deal in Moon Shells. Crown Shells are watched carefully. Sovereign Shells are rarely carried openly unless the owner wants attention.

Common Exchange

- 10 Pale Shells = 1 Rose Shell
- 5 Rose Shells = 1 Moon Shell
- 5 Moon Shells = 1 Crown Shell
- 5 Crown Shells = 1 Sovereign Shell

This keeps the math simple while allowing valuable items to be priced without huge numbers.

Why Shells Have Value

Trade shells are valuable because they are rare, portable, durable, and widely recognized. A true trade shell has three marks of authenticity.

Pressure Rings are subtle internal bands formed only under specific depth conditions.

Inner Fire is a faint sheen or color shift visible when turned in moving water.

Weight Memory is the way true shells settle differently than ordinary carved shell or polished bone.

Most merchants can identify false Pale or Rose Shells. Moon Shells and above may require a careful Bargain, Scholar, or Investigation Test to verify. Arkborn trade houses and Coral Court counting chambers use lens bowls, pearl scales, and pressure trays to detect forgery.

Carrying Shells

Shells are often carried on trade cords. A trade cord may hold mixed denominations, separated by knots or beads. Wealthier travelers use sealed shell tubes, lock pouches, or coral-clasp purses.

The Kelpway prefer flexible trade cords that can be hidden in route gear. Shellhold merchants use stamped trade tubes. Coral Court nobles carry shell credit tokens backed by house treasuries. Arkborn record houses issue sealed debt plates. Leviathan-Tide traders often use shell cords tied into migration knots. Abyssal Kin may prefer barter, debt marks, or dark shell tokens accepted only in deepwater markets.

Barter and Debt

Shells are common, but barter remains important. In isolated settlements, useful goods may matter more than currency.

Common barter goods include medicine, preserved food, tools, safe passage, route knowledge, salvage rights, beast tack, pressure parts, pearl records, alchemical preparations, rare foraged materials, and favors owed by reliable people.

Debt is also powerful. A Shellhold work-debt, Coral Court oath-debt, Blackfin blood-debt, Arkborn record-debt, or Kelpway route-debt may matter more than any shell pouch.

Counterfeit and Illegal Shells

False shells exist. Some are carved from common shell. Others are alchemically treated. The most dangerous are grown from corrupted mollusks or altered by relic exposure.

Counterfeit trade shells can create adventure complications. A Protagonist may be paid in false Moon Shells, accused of passing forged Crown Shells, or hired to find the source of pressure-ring counterfeits.

Some shells are illegal to trade. These include shells taken from sacred Kelpway beds, forbidden abyssal shell pits, sealed Arkborn vault stores, or living mollusk colonies protected by Coral Court law.

Director Guidance

Shell currency should make trade feel concrete without slowing the game. Use exact prices when purchasing gear, medicine, mounts, weapons, services, or rare materials. Use broad estimates when the precise amount does not matter.

A few Pale Shells buy food, small repairs, cheap lodging, or basic supplies.

Rose Shells buy modest tools, common medicine, guide service, or ordinary weapons.

Moon Shells buy skilled craft, good armor, alchemical items, travel rights, or professional service.

Crown Shells buy major gear, rare materials, legal favors, high-quality weapons, mounts, or serious bribes.

Sovereign Shells buy life-changing goods: relic access, ransom, major vehicles, noble debts, vault permissions, and dangerous secrets.

Weapons

Damage values assume the standard One-on-One RPG combat structure already used in the system. The Director may adjust exact damage by weapon quality, size, Bloodtide anatomy, or unusual circumstances.

Blade Weapons

Name	Damage	Range	Cost	Description
Shell Knife	1d6	Melee	8 PS	A common utility blade made from sharpened shell, bone, or salvage metal. Nearly everyone carries some version of one.
Reef Dagger	1d6+1	Melee	2 RS	A narrow dueling and utility dagger favored in Coral Court cities. It is built for quick thrusts and close work.
Curved Kelp Knife	1d6+1	Melee	2 RS	A hooked blade used by Kelpway hunters to cut cord, growth, and flesh. It works well in tangled terrain.
Vault Guard Blade	1d8	Melee	1 MS	A short, heavy Arkborn blade designed for close

Name	Damage	Range	Cost	Description
				quarters near sealed doors and archive chambers.
Reef Saber	1d8+1	Melee	2 MS	A Coral Court dueling weapon with a coral-bone grip and fine balance. It is elegant, fast, and expensive to maintain.
Black Coral Blade	1d8+2	Melee	4 MS	A dark blade made from treated black coral and salvage bronze. Abyssal hunters and smugglers prize it. Possession may draw suspicion.

Blunt Weapons

Name	Damage	Range	Cost	Description
Bone Club	1d6+1	Melee	6 PS	A simple club made from dense bone or shellwood-like growth. Common among guards, workers, and raiders.
Shell Mace	1d8	Melee	2 RS	A weighted mace with a shellstone head. It is practical against armor, carapace, and brittle reef growth.
Gate Hammer	1d8+2	Melee	1 MS	A Shellhold work hammer used for repair and combat. It is heavy but trusted.
Stonewake Maul	1d10	Melee	3 MS	A two-handed maul used by Shellhold labor crews and fortress defenders. It requires room and strength.
Pressure Baton	1d6+2	Melee	2 RS	A short baton of dense bone, vent-metal, or shellstone. Useful in tight corridors and guard work.
Vent-Metal Crusher	1d10+1	Melee	1 CS	A rare heavy weapon made from vent-metal and shellstone. It can crack armor and old fittings alike.

Polearms and Harpoons

Name	Damage	Range	Cost	Description
Bone Spear	1d8	Melee	8 PS	A common thrusting weapon with bone, shell, or hard coral point. Easy to maintain and effective underwater.
Reef Trident	1d8+1	Melee	2 RS	A three-pronged weapon used by guards, hunters, and city patrols. It can pin or control smaller foes.
Hook-Spear	1d8+1	Melee	3 RS	A spear with a side hook used to pull enemies, drag objects, or catch lines. Kelpway guides and ruin crews favor it.
Harpoon	1d8+2	20 ft.	1 MS	A barbed thrusting or short-throw weapon with a line attachment. It is used for hunting, boarding, and controlling prey.
Leviathan Harpoon	1d10+2	30 ft.	1 CS	A heavy barbed weapon with

Name	Damage	Range	Cost	Description
				reinforced line and vent-metal head. It is made for large creatures, not ordinary duels.
Gate Pike	1d10	Melee	2 MS	A long Shellhold defensive weapon used in narrow gate passages. It is poor in cramped ruins but powerful in formation.

Thrown and Special Weapons

Name	Damage	Range	Cost	Description
Weighted Shell Dart	1d6	15 ft.	5 PS	A short thrown dart weighted for underwater use. Often carried in bundles.
Glass Spine Dart	1d6+1	15 ft.	1 RS	A brittle blueglass dart that may carry irritant or numbing toxin. Mishandling is common.
Barbed Kelp-Dart	1d6+1	20 ft.	2 RS	A Kelpway dart made to snag flesh, cloth, or soft armor. Often used from concealment.
Throwing Hook	1d6	15 ft.	1 RS	A hooked throwing tool used to catch lines, gear, or exposed limbs.
Alchemical Capsule	Varies	10 ft.	varies	A sealed capsule designed to break on impact. It may carry smoke-silt, glassflash, irritant, or corrosive mixtures.
Net Line	Special	10 ft.	2 RS	A weighted net or snare line used to entangle. On success, the target may need Escape or Athletics to break free.

Armor and Shields

Armor Rating modifiers use the existing One-on-One RPG armor structure. Armor protects, but the Director should remember weight, drag, body shape, and depth. Heavy armor may impose penalties in strong current, long travel, or open-water pursuit.

Name	AR Modifier	Cost	Description
Kelpweave Wrap	+1 AR	2 RS	Flexible layers of woven kelp fiber and treated cord. Light, quiet, and common among scouts.
Pressure Cloth Harness	+1 AR	3 RS	A fitted travel harness made from dense pressure cloth. It resists scraping, cold, and minor cuts.
Treated Hide Jerkin	+2 AR	1 MS	Flexible armor made from cured sea-beast hide. Useful for travelers and hunters.
Mantlehide Armor	+2 AR	2 MS	Armor made from treated rayhide or mantlehide. It is flexible, graceful, and prized by Leviathan-Tide warriors.

Name	AR Modifier	Cost	Description
Bone Plate Harness	+3 AR	3 MS	Overlapping bone plates tied with shell fiber. Strong but less subtle.
Shell-Plate Armor	+4 AR	1 CS	Heavy Shellhold armor made from shellstone, bone, and treated hide. Powerful in gate defense, poor for long stealth travel.
Coral Court Nacre Harness	+2 AR	3 MS	Elegant armor of nacre plates and pressure cloth. Light enough for dueling and formal appearances.
Black Coral Guard	+3 AR	1 CS	Dark coral and hide armor used in deepwater or abyssal patrol work. It can look threatening in upper cities.
Arkborn Archive Armor	+2 AR	2 MS	Reinforced protective gear with sealed pouches, gloves, and record-safe compartments.
Ruin-Breaker Hazard Harness	+3 AR	4 MS	Practical armor with tool hooks, padding, and reinforced joints for salvage work and unstable ruins.

Shields

Name	AR Modifier	Cost	Description
Shell Buckler	+1 AR	1 RS	A small round shield of shell or bone. Easy to carry and useful in close fighting.
Reef Guard Shield	+2 AR	3 RS	A coral-rimmed shield used by patrols and court guards. Good against blades and darts.
Gate Shield	+3 AR	2 MS	A heavy Shellhold shield designed for bracing, corridor defense, and protecting others.
Mantlehide Shield	+1 AR	2 RS	A flexible shield stretched over light bone. Useful for riders and open-water travelers.
Black Coral Ward Shield	+2 AR	3 MS	A dark, narrow shield used by abyssal guards and trench scouts. It absorbs light well.

Tools and Kits

Name	Cost	Description
Basic Tool Roll	2 RS	A practical roll of shell knives, bone hooks, cord, needles, small files, and repair bits.
Mason’s Tool Roll	2 MS	Seal hammer, brace hook, pressure chalk, resin needle, hinge clamps, and heavy line. Used by Pressure Masons and Shellhold workers.
Ruin-Breaker Kit	3 MS	Probe pole, chalkstone markers, grip hooks, salvage pouches, brace wedges, and compact cutting tools.
Cartographer’s Case	2 MS	Waterproof chart leaves, shell stylus, route cord, depth beads, and a small pearl lens.
Relic Scholar’s Kit	3 MS	Lens bowl, symbol plates, sealed sample tubes, soft brushes, gloves, and record leaves.
Lockpicking Tools	1 MS	Fine shell picks, narrow hooks, pressure clasps, and seal probes.
Beast Handler’s Kit	2 RS	Food paste, calming cord, grip harness, small call shell, and grooming hooks.
Trapmaker’s Bundle	2 RS	Snare cord, barbs, weights, trigger shells, and small hooks.
Pearl Lens	1 MS	A small lens used to inspect

Name	Cost	Description
		shells, inscriptions, wounds, and faint magical signs.
Lantern-Jelly Glass Lens	3 MS	A refined lens made from stabilized lantern-jelly glass. It improves low-light inspection and alchemical work.

Survival Gear

Name	Cost	Description
Kelpweave Travel Harness	2 RS	A flexible harness with loops for tools, shells, vials, and small weapons.
Pressure-Cloth Travel Wrap	3 RS	A protective wrap used against cold, scraping stone, light debris, and minor pressure discomfort.
Seed-Lamp Cluster	1 RS	A small living light cluster carried in a shell cage. It gives dim light and must be fed.
Glowgel Lamp	2 MS	A sealed alchemical lamp that gives steady light for a scene or journey segment.
Route-Knot Cord	5 PS	A cord used to mark simple route notes, warnings, or ownership signs. Kelpway versions may carry complex meaning.
Shelter Sheet	2 RS	Folded kelpweave, mantlehide, or pressure cloth used to make a temporary shelter.
Emergency Brace Spikes	1 RS	Short spikes used to anchor lines, brace doors, or secure gear in strong current.
Silent Line	1 RS	A soft line treated to move quietly in water. Used by scouts and climbers.
Shuttered Light Shell	2 RS	A light shell with a cover that can be opened, closed, or signaled.
Trade Cord	2 PS	A cord for carrying Shells, tokens, small beads, or barter marks.

Deepworks Gear

Name	Cost	Description
Pressure Gauge Shell	2 MS	A shell-and-metal instrument used to judge pressure changes in chambers, gates, or descent routes.
Vent-Metal Measuring Rod	1 MS	A marked rod used by builders and Domewrights to measure shifts, cracks, and gate alignment.
Coral Cement Plugs	2 RS	Small emergency plugs used to slow leaks or seal minor cracks.
Brine Pump Key	3 MS	A specialized tool used to operate or unlock certain Shellhold pump systems.
Descent Line Rig	2 MS	Heavy line, clips, and harness pieces used for safe vertical travel.
Gate Signal Shell	1 RS	A hard shell whistle or tapper used to send simple gate and work crew signals.

Name	Cost	Description
Sealed Sample Tube	5 PS	A small pressure-safe tube used for water, silt, tissue, or relic fragments.
Airlock Gauge Shell	4 MS	An Arkborn tool used to test sealed air chambers, pressure boundaries, and old vault systems.
Emergency Seal Paste	2 RS	A nonmagical paste used to patch gear, masks, small leaks, and damaged containers.
Wall-Crawler Clamp Set	1 CS	Heavy clamps used by repair crews to cling to walls, hulls, leviathan platforms, or exterior structures.

Herbalist and Alchemist Gear

Name	Cost	Description
Herbalist’s Wrap	2 RS	Pouches, cutting tools, shell cups, binding cloth, and herb markers for field preparation.
Living Medicine Roll	1 MS	A better healer’s kit with small living containers, salve cups, root tubes, and wound tools.
Alchemist’s Shell Case	2 MS	A padded case for vials, salts, powders, ampoules, and sealed reagents.
Reaction Bowl	1 MS	A treated shell or lantern-glass bowl used to test residues and mix unstable substances.
Pressing Plates	2 RS	Porous shell plates used to press moss, kelp, fungus, and soft medicines into transportable sheets.
Silt-Drying Pouch	1 RS	A pouch packed with drying silt or castings to preserve delicate materials.
Brine Reduction Vessel	3 MS	A sealed vessel used to reduce liquids through mineral reaction or vent heat.
Bone Lancet Set	1 RS	Fine cutting tools used by healers and alchemists.
Pearl-Stoppered Vials	2 RS	Durable vials used for refined preparations.
Hazard Ampoule Rack	2 MS	A reinforced rack used to carry volatile alchemical capsules safely.

Vehicles

Vehicles are useful but not effortless. Most require maintenance, trained handlers, Deepworks knowledge, current sense, or suitable routes. Costs assume ordinary quality.

Name	Cost	Description
Kelp Skiff	2 CS	A small flexible skiff grown from buoyant root, ribbed kelp, shell braces, and treated hide. It is quiet and excellent in greenwater routes.
Shell Barge	4 CS	A heavy cargo craft used by Shellholds and traders. Slow, durable, and practical.
Current Sled	1 CS	A light sled pulled by trained animals or guided through strong flow. Used by scouts, couriers, and small crews.
Root Raft	3 MS	A Kelpway floating platform that can be disguised as harmless growth. Useful for camps and slow travel.
Armored Repair Crawler	2 SS	A wall-clinging Deepworks vehicle used for exterior repairs on holds, gates, and large structures. Requires crew and maintenance.
Sealed Survey Pod	1 SS	An Arkborn pod used to enter toxic water, pressure pockets, or sealed chambers. Slow but protective.
Ray-Skiff	3 CS	A graceful open-water craft shaped like a broad ray. Fast in good current, fragile in collisions.
Cargo Frame	2 CS	A simple open-water hauling frame pulled by beasts or current craft. Common on trade routes.
Mantle Platform	1 SS+	A large modular platform used on or near leviathan routes. Price varies by size, rights, and route permissions.
Descent Carrier	4 CS	A sealed carrier used to move through dangerous pressure shifts

Name	Cost	Description
		for short distances. Not suitable for long expeditions.

Pets and Small Companions

These creatures are usually not combatants. They provide warning, messages, light, companionship, small utility, or story hooks. Costs assume trained or semi-trained animals.

Name	Cost	Description
Lantern Fish	2 RS	A small glowing fish kept in a shell cage or trained to follow a handler. Useful as dim light and route marker.
Shell Crab	1 RS	A clever little scavenger that can fetch small objects, clean scraps, and pinch fingers with enthusiasm.
Messenger Eel	3 RS	A slim eel trained to carry tiny sealed messages along familiar routes.
Scent-Ray Pup	1 MS	A young scent-ray trained to follow blood, herbs, or familiar people through water. Loyal but curious.
Inkling Squid	3 RS	A small squid that can release a brief ink cloud when frightened or signaled. Popular with smugglers.
Kelp Ferret	4 RS	A sleek greenwater creature that slips through kelp and small cracks. It is charming, thieving, and hard to keep out of packs.
Warning Shrimp	2 RS	A small snapping shrimp that reacts to pressure shifts, predators, and certain vibrations. Annoying but useful.
Armor-Snail	3 RS	A fist-sized snail with a hard shell and strong grip. It can carry tiny notes, polish growth, or cling to gear.
Reef Glider	1 MS	A small raylike pet that follows gentle hand signs and can scout short distances in open water.
Pearl-Eyed Watcher Fish	1 MS	A pale fish with large reflective eyes. It reacts strongly to

Name	Cost	Description
		movement, hidden lights, and unfamiliar creatures.

Mounts and Dray Beasts

Mounts are living creatures with their own instincts, needs, and limits. Riding uses **Riding**. Training and calming use **Beast Handling**. Knowledge of their habits may use **Creature Lore**.

Ray Mount

Region: Blue Realms, Leviathan routes, open-water shelves
Wounds: 2
Attack: Tail Lash 45%, 1d6
Cost: 1 CS

Ray mounts are broad, graceful creatures used for open-water travel. They glide well and conserve energy over distance. They dislike tight ruins and sudden loud impacts.

A trained ray mount is valuable for scouts, envoys, and Leviathan-Tide travelers. Its harness is usually made from mantlehide, shell fiber, and soft bone fittings.

Eel-Runner

Region: Greenways, reef routes, Dim Roads
Wounds: 2
Attack: Bite 50%, 1d6+1
Cost: 4 MS

Eel-runners are long, strong mounts used in tight routes and fast chases. They can twist through kelp, root channels, and broken ruins. They are intelligent enough to become troublesome.

Kelpway guides and smugglers favor them. Riders must trust the eel's instincts without letting it choose every route.

Shellback Hauler

Region: Shellhold Bastions, Blue Realms, trade routes
Wounds: 4
Attack: Ram 45%, 1d8
Cost: 2 CS

Shellback haulers are slow, powerful beasts used to pull cargo frames, stone loads, and heavy gear. Their backs are armored with natural plates. They are calm unless mistreated.

Shellholds rely on them for work near gates and trade corridors. They are not fast mounts, but they are hard to stop.

Currentfish

Region: Open currents, Blue Realms, Sunlit Skin
Wounds: 1
Attack: None or Body Slam 35%, 1d4
Cost: 2 MS

Currentfish are sleek, fast creatures used by messengers and light riders. They travel well with flow but tire quickly against it. Their bodies shimmer blue or silver.

They are not war mounts. They are escape, courier, and scouting mounts.

Armored Seahorse

Region: Coral Court waters, reef patrol zones
Wounds: 2
Attack: Horn Jab 45%, 1d6
Cost: 1 CS

Armored seahorses are tall, curled-bodied reef mounts with natural plating and a sharp forward horn. They are formal, showy, and surprisingly brave.

Coral Court patrols and noble riders favor them. They require careful care and do not tolerate rough handling.

Skiff-Pulling Ray

Region: Blue Realms, trade roads, Leviathan routes
Wounds: 3
Attack: Tail Lash 40%, 1d6
Cost: 1 CS

These large rays are trained to pull small skiffs, cargo frames, and passenger sleds. They are steadier than riding rays and less graceful.

They are common among traders, route crews, and settlements that need reliable movement more than speed.

Blackfin Razorback

Region: Dim Roads, Blackfin waters, Black Reaches border
Wounds: 3
Attack: Bite 55%, 1d8
Cost: 2 CS

Razorbacks are dark, powerful deepwater mounts with sharp fins and aggressive instincts. Blackfin Houses train them for patrols, hunts, and war parties.

They are not suitable for inexperienced riders. In upper waters, they draw fear and attention.

Root-Sled Beast

Region: Greenways, Kelpway routes, root forests
Wounds: 3
Attack: Bite 40%, 1d6
Cost: 4 MS

Root-sled beasts are broad, slow creatures trained to pull sleds through kelp and root tangles. They have blunt heads, strong shoulders, and calm temperaments.

Kelpway clans value them during seasonal moves. They can sense unsafe growth before most riders notice.

Mantle Calf

Region: Leviathan routes, open-water nurseries
Wounds: 3
Attack: Body Slam 40%, 1d6+1
Cost: Not normally sold

Mantle calves are young raylike route beasts. They are not true leviathans, but they may grow large. Some Leviathan-Tide clans bond with them for travel and ritual roles.

They are rarely bought with shells. They are gifted, inherited, rescued, or bonded through route custom.

Stonejaw Grazer

Region: Blue Realms, reef farms, Shellhold outskirts
Wounds: 4
Attack: Bite 40%, 1d8
Cost: 1 CS

Stonejaw grazers are heavy, placid beasts that feed on tough reef growth. They pull loads, clear overgrowth, and serve as durable dray animals.

They are slow, stubborn, and beloved by many workers. A frightened Stonejaw can wreck a market stall without noticing.

Trade Goods

Trade goods vary by region and need. Prices below are broad guidelines.

Name	Cost	Description
Common Food Bundle	5 PS	Travel food for a short journey segment. Usually kelp, fish, shellmeat, or fungus.
Preserved Food Bundle	1 RS	Salt-cured, pressed, or sealed food suitable for longer travel.
Common Foraged Materials	1–5 PS	Amber Kelp, Calming Moss, Siltworm Castings, or similar materials.
Uncommon Materials	1–5 RS	Bitterroot, Fever Frond, Silver Gillweed, Saltglass, or similar goods.
Rare Materials	1–3 MS	Brine Pearl, Black Lantern Jelly sac, Moon-Salt, Pressurecap, or similar goods.
Hazardous Materials	1 CS+	Redbloom Filament, abyssal shell, relic-tainted growth, or restricted arcane materials.
Herbalism Preparation	1–5 RS	Common prepared salves, washes, poultices, and wraps.
Alchemy Preparation	1–5 MS	Sealed gels, tonics, vials, ampoules, capsules, or quasi-magical mixtures.
Guide Service	1 RS–1 MS	Cost depends on route danger, guide skill, and politics.
Skilled Craft Service	1–5 MS	Repairs, custom fittings, tool work, armor adjustment, or specialist craft.
Safe Passage Rights	1 MS–1 CS	Passage through gates, route territories, clan waters, or guarded trade channels.
Relic Access Fee	1 CS–1 SS	Legal or illegal payment for access to ruins, vaults, relic sites, or sealed records.
Fine Pearl Record	1–5 CS	A legal, historical, or magical memory record. Some are priceless.
Salvage Claim Token	1 MS–1 CS	A recognized claim to recover goods from a wreck, ruin, or old site.
Court Gift String	1 MS+	Shells, pearls, coral beads, and formal tokens arranged

Name	Cost	Description
		for diplomatic exchange.
Work Crew Hire	1–3 MS per job	Labor for repair, salvage, hauling, construction, or convoy preparation.

Equipment Quality

The listed costs assume ordinary working quality. Fine, masterwork, culturally significant, concealed, custom-fitted, or rare-material versions may cost two to five times more.

Poor equipment may cost half as much, but it should come with risk. A cheap shell knife chips. A bargain pressure harness leaks. A counterfeit Glowgel Lamp attracts things instead of lighting the way.

In Undine, gear should not feel disposable. The right tool can save a life. The wrong one can become the reason a chamber floods.

Chapter Fifteen: Underwater Combat

Combat in Undine uses the standard One-on-One RPG rules. Attacks, defenses, Contests, Damage, Wounds, Armor, Advantage, Disadvantage, Destiny, Degree of Success, and Degree of Failure all work normally.

The water changes the situation.

A fight in the Drowned Realms is rarely flat. Enemies may rise from below, drift above, hide in silt, vanish through kelp, or strike from behind a reef wall. Current can move combatants. Light can fail. Blood can draw predators. A heavy weapon may be deadly in a gate hall and clumsy in open water. A spear may be better than a sword when a creature charges from a lower angle.

This chapter does not replace the core combat system. It adds the underwater elements that matter most in play.

Combat in Three Dimensions

Most combat systems assume fighters stand on the same ground. Undine assumes water.

A combatant may be:

- directly ahead;
- behind;
- above;
- below;
- above and to one side;
- below and behind;
- hidden in kelp;
- braced against stone;
- drifting in current;
- clinging to a wall;
- mounted on a beast;
- moving through open water.

The Director does not need to track every inch. Use exact position only when it matters. If everyone is fighting in a tight Shellhold corridor, standard positioning may be enough. If a predator attacks from below in open water, use the **Three-Plane Hex**.

The Three-Plane Hex

The Three-Plane Hex is an optional positioning tool for underwater combat, chases, ambushes, hazards, and exploration. It represents the twenty

most useful relative positions around a central character, object, creature, or point of action.

The center is the reference point. This is usually the Protagonist, but it may also be a vehicle, beast, gate, relic, wounded ally, or objective.

The Three-Plane Hex has three horizontal planes:

- the **Main Plane**, level with the reference point;
- the **Upper Plane**, above the reference point;
- the **Lower Plane**, below the reference point.

Each plane has six surrounding directions. In addition, there is one position directly above and one directly below.

This creates twenty possible positions.

Position Numbers

Use a d20 when random direction matters.

Main Plane

Positions **1–6** are around the reference point at the same level.

Use these for enemies, allies, hazards, or objects that are level with the Protagonist.

Upper Plane

Positions **7–12** are around the reference point above its level.

Position **13** is directly above.

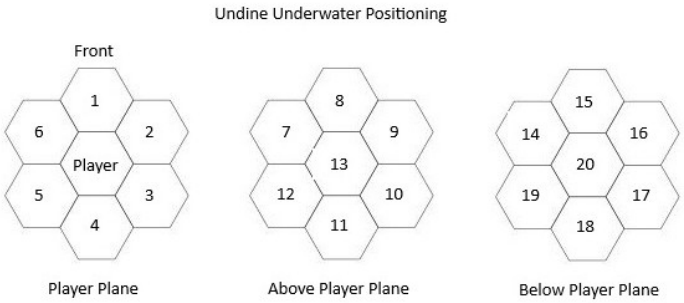
Use these for attackers descending, allies rising, falling debris, threats in upper water, or creatures circling above.

Lower Plane

Positions **14–19** are around the reference point below its level.

Position **20** is directly below.

Use these for predators rising from beneath, sinking objects, chasm threats, lower ambushes, or enemies dragging a character downward.



1d20 Positioning for Various Situations

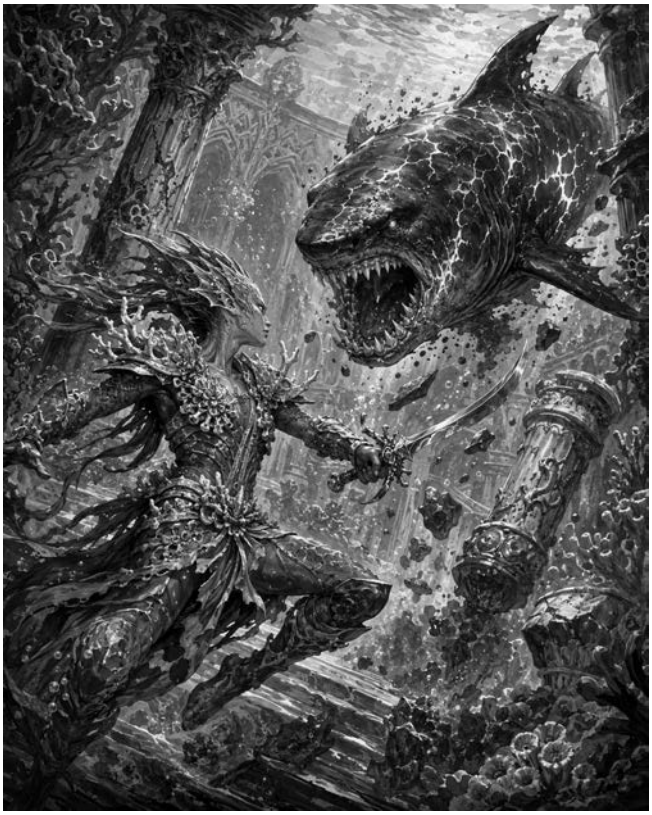
Using the Three-Plane Hex

Use the Three-Plane Hex when direction or vertical position changes the scene.

Good uses include:

- determining where an ambush begins;
- placing enemies in silt or darkness;
- tracking forced movement;
- resolving failed Currentcraft positioning;
- determining where a creature appears;
- handling attacks from above or below;
- placing hazards in open water;
- managing pursuit in three dimensions;
- showing where allies are during a chaotic fight;
- determining where a dropped item drifts;
- resolving current displacement.

Do not use the Three-Plane Hex when it slows the scene. If position does not matter, ignore it.



Random Position

When the Director needs a random direction, roll **1d20**.

Example uses:

- Where does the predator strike from?
- Where does the current push the Protagonist?
- Where does the relic pulse appear?
- Where does the falling debris pass?
- Where does the enemy flee?
- Where does the silt cloud open?
- Where does the lost ally reappear?

The result gives the relative position. The Director then describes it in the fiction.

A roll of **20** may mean something rises from directly below. A roll of **13** may mean a threat descends from directly above. These are excellent positions for surprise, falling attacks, or sudden vertical danger.

Position and Advantage

Position can create Advantage or Disadvantage when it matters.

Examples:

- **+10 Advantage** for attacking from an unseen upper or lower angle.
- **+10 Advantage** for holding high position in clear water.
- **+10 Advantage** for using cover between planes.
- **−10 Disadvantage** when defending against attacks from above and below at the same time.
- **−10 Disadvantage** when fighting while off-balance after forced movement.
- **−20 Disadvantage** when blinded, spun, dragged, or attacked from an unknown plane.

Use ordinary One-on-One modifier logic. The Three-Plane Hex tells the table where things are. It does not create automatic bonuses unless position matters.

Movement Between Planes

A character may move between the Main, Upper, and Lower planes as part of normal movement when the scene allows it.

Use **Currentcraft** when movement is difficult, opposed, rushed, or dangerous.

Call for Currentcraft when a character:

- rises or dives under pressure;
- changes planes while fighting;
- avoids being dragged by current;
- moves through silt or kelp;
- escapes a predator's pull;
- reaches a wounded ally above or below;
- crosses a dangerous vertical gap;
- fights in open water without bracing.

Success means the character reaches the intended position or keeps control.

Failure may move the character to a random nearby position, impose Disadvantage, separate them from an ally, or advance a Current Shift, Predator Attention, or Route Lost Clock.

Forced Movement

Many underwater effects move characters.

Forced movement may come from:

- current;
- spells;
- large creatures;
- grapples;
- harpoon lines;
- falling debris;
- pressure bursts;
- vehicle motion;
- leviathan movement;
- failed Currentcraft;
- collapsing structures.

When forced movement matters, shift the character one or more positions on the Three-Plane Hex. If the direction is uncertain, roll 1d20.

The Director may call for **Currentcraft**, **Athletics**, **Escape**, or **Endurance** to resist forced movement.

Orientation and Facing

Undine does not require strict facing rules.

A character can turn in water. They are not locked to a single front unless something restricts them. Use facing only when it is fictionally important.

Facing may matter when:

- the character is braced against a wall;
- a shield protects one direction;
- the character is riding a mount;
- armor restricts movement;
- visibility is limited;
- enemies attack from multiple planes;
- a creature has a clear vulnerable side.

If a shield, wall, mount, or large body protects one direction, attacks from another direction may ignore that protection or impose Disadvantage on defense.

Cover in Three Dimensions

Cover works normally, but it can be above, below, or between planes.

Common underwater cover includes:

- coral ridges;
- shell walls;
- kelp curtains;
- stone columns;
- wreckage;
- silt banks;
- beast bodies;
- vehicles;
- gate structures;
- ruins;
- reef shelves;
- floating platforms;
- leviathan growths.

Cover may grant +10 or +20 Advantage to defense, or impose Disadvantage on attacks, depending on how much protection it offers.

Soft cover, such as kelp or silt, may help Stealth but not stop attacks. Hard cover, such as shellstone or bone plate, can block weapons and debris.

Silt, Darkness, and Visibility

Visibility often changes during underwater combat.

Use the light categories from the Depth, Pressure, and Travel chapter.

Clear

No penalty.

Dim

Sight-based Tests may suffer **−10 Disadvantage** if light matters.

Dark

Sight-based Tests may suffer **−20 Disadvantage** unless the character has light, abyssal senses, magic, or another way to act.

Blinded

Sight-based actions may fail or require another approach.

Silt clouds, ink, alchemical smoke, disturbed sediment, Redbloom spores, and broken coral can all reduce visibility.

When visibility fails, combatants may rely on:

- Awareness;
- Danger Sense;
- Currentcraft;
- Creature Lore;
- sound;
- vibration;
- light markers;
- touch lines;
- bioluminescence;
- cultural signals.

Blood in the Water

Blood matters.

A Wound in open water can attract predators, parasites, or scavengers. It may also help trackers, blood rites, or scent-sensitive creatures.

The Director may start or advance a **Predator Attention Clock** when:

- a character suffers a Wound in open water;
- a creature is killed and left bleeding;
- a fight continues in predator territory;
- blood spreads near known hunting grounds;
- the party carries wounded prey or corpses.

This should not happen every time someone is cut. Use it when the scene makes the danger interesting.

Current in Combat

Current is one of the most important underwater battlefield features.

Current may:

- push combatants;
- impose Disadvantage on movement;
- grant Advantage to those moving with it;
- carry blood, scent, silt, poison, or light;
- move thrown weapons off course;
- separate allies;
- drag characters toward hazards;
- pull bodies into chasms;
- make retreat easier or harder.

The Director may define current at the start of a combat scene.

Examples:

- **Gentle current**: no penalty, but drifting objects move.
- **Strong current**: Currentcraft needed for precise movement.
- **Violent current**: movement-heavy actions may suffer −10 or −20 Disadvantage.
- **Unstable current**: failed Tests may move characters randomly.
- **Magical current**: may ignore ordinary expectations.

Current should create choices. A player may ride it for speed, brace against it, use it to scatter enemies, or risk being carried into danger.

Bracing

A character who braces against stone, coral, shell, wreckage, a mount, or a line may resist movement better.

Bracing may grant +10 Advantage to:

- resist forced movement;
- hold position;
- use a heavy weapon;
- protect an ally;
- cast under pressure;
- repair during combat;
- keep a gate from opening;
- pull a harpoon line.

A character in open water without bracing may suffer Disadvantage when using heavy weapons, resisting large creatures, or holding against current.

Weapons Underwater

Most weapons work underwater, but they do not all work equally well.

Thrusting Weapons

Spears, tridents, harpoons, pikes, and narrow blades are excellent underwater. They move cleanly and control distance.

They may gain +10 Advantage when the weapon's reach and direction clearly matter.

Short Blades

Knives, daggers, short sabers, and hooked blades are reliable in close quarters. They work well in grapples, kelp, ruins, and tight spaces.

Heavy Blunt Weapons

Maces, hammers, mauls, and crushers are powerful when the wielder is braced or in tight corridors. In open water, they can drag and overcommit.

The Director may impose −10 Disadvantage when a heavy weapon is used without bracing in open water.

Wide Slashing Weapons

Wide cutting weapons are less ideal underwater unless designed for it. A reef saber or curved kelp knife is shaped for water. A broad surface-style sword would be clumsy.

Poorly designed slashing weapons may suffer −10 Disadvantage.

Thrown Weapons

Thrown weapons have limited range underwater. Weighted darts, small harpoons, capsules, and hooks work best.

Thrown attacks may suffer Disadvantage when:

- range is long;
- current is strong;
- water is silted;
- the weapon is not weighted for water;
- the target changes plane.

Nets and Lines

Nets, snare lines, harpoon lines, and hooks are very effective underwater. They can restrain, drag, anchor, or reposition targets.

A successful net or line attack may force the target to make Escape, Athletics, Blades, or Currentcraft to break free.

Armor Underwater

Armor protects, but it has consequences.

Light armor rarely causes trouble. Heavy armor may matter in open water, long travel, strong current, or rapid depth change.

Possible effects of heavy armor:

- −10 Disadvantage on long Currentcraft travel;
- −10 Disadvantage when trying to rise quickly;
- increased danger in strong current;
- trouble with stealth;
- faster fatigue;
- better bracing in gate halls or on solid ground.

Do not apply these penalties constantly. Use them when armor's weight and drag matter.

Shellhold armor is excellent in corridors and gate defense. Kelpway armor is light and flexible. Leviathan-Tide armor is shaped for gliding. Arkborn archive armor protects tools and records. Abyssal armor often hides light and resists pressure.

Mounted Combat

Mounted combat uses the standard combat rules, with Riding and Beast Handling added when control matters.

Call for **Riding** when the rider:

- attacks from a mount in combat;
- avoids being thrown;
- controls a mount under fear;
- makes a sharp turn;
- dives or rises quickly;
- fights during a chase;
- keeps position in current.

Call for **Beast Handling** when the rider or handler:

- calms a frightened mount;
- directs a trained creature outside combat rhythm;
- prevents panic;
- manages injury;
- works with an unfamiliar beast.

A mounted character may gain Advantage from speed, height, force, or angle. They may suffer Disadvantage in tight ruins, kelp tangles, crowded spaces, or if the mount panics.

Large Creatures

Large creatures change the battlefield.

A shellback hauler, mantle calf, razorback, giant eel, predator, or leviathan parasite may occupy several positions at once. True leviathans are battlefield terrain as much as creatures.

Against large creatures:

- position matters;
- climbing or clinging may require Athletics or Currentcraft;
- attacks may target weak points;
- ordinary forced movement may not work;
- harpoons and lines become important;
- Wounds may represent driving off, injuring, or weakening part of the creature.

A large creature may attack multiple positions, sweep through a plane, create current, or force everyone nearby to test against movement.

The Director should describe scale clearly. A Protagonist should know whether they are fighting an enemy, a moving wall, or a living disaster.

Combat on Leviathans

Some scenes may occur on, beside, or beneath enormous beasts.

This is not ordinary ground.

A leviathan's body may:

- tilt;
- dive;
- roll;
- shudder;
- scrape against terrain;
- attract parasites;
- change depth;
- create current wakes;
- panic under pain;
- respond to magic;
- carry settlements, platforms, or harnesses.

The Director may use a **Leviathan Panic Clock**, **Current Shift Clock**, or **Predator Attention Clock** during such scenes.

Combatants may need Athletics to hold on, Currentcraft to move along the body, Beast Handling to calm the creature, and Tactics to avoid causing more harm.

Spellcasting Underwater

All magic in Undine is assumed to work underwater unless a spell says otherwise. The cultures of the Drowned Realms developed their magic in water.

Spellcasting may still be affected by combat conditions.

Apply Disadvantage when:

- the caster is wounded;
- the caster is being dragged;
- current disrupts the ritual;
- visibility matters and fails;
- pressure interferes;
- the caster lacks a required focus;
- a spell's School is poorly suited to the area;
- the caster is outside native depth under stress.

Apply Advantage when:

- the caster has proper tools;
- the School suits the environment;
- the caster is braced;
- an ally protects them;
- they have time;
- the scene provides strong symbolic or material support.

Ritual spells are difficult during combat unless the scene specifically allows it.

Combat and Clocks

Underwater combat often interacts with Clocks.

Use Clocks when the fight worsens a wider situation.

Examples:

- A fight near a cracked gate advances **Gate Collapse**.
- Blood in open water advances **Predator Attention**.
- Heavy movement in a silt bed advances **Siltstorm**.
- Magic near a relic advances **Relic Awakening**.
- Fighting on a mantle giant advances **Leviathan Panic**.
- Combat in a dry chamber advances **Air Vault Instability**.
- Redbloom spores released by injury advance **Redbloom Infection**.
- A missed attack damages a pressure wall and advances **Pressure Failure**.

This keeps combat tied to the environment.

A fight should change the water around it.

Underwater Combat Examples

Example One: Ambush from Below

A Kelpway Current Guide crosses a dim root channel. The Director knows a predator is hiding below, but its exact angle is uncertain. The Director rolls 1d20 on the Three-Plane Hex and gets **20**.

The predator rises from directly below.

Because the attack comes from an unexpected lower angle, the Director gives the predator +10 Advantage on its opening attack. The Protagonist

has Danger Sense and rolls to notice the pressure change in time. On a success, the Advantage is canceled or the Protagonist may defend normally.

If the Protagonist fails badly, the predator may drag them down one plane and advance a Predator Attention Clock as blood enters the water.

Example Two: Fighting in a Gate Hall

A Shellguard fights raiders in a Shellhold gate hall. The space is narrow and braced with stone. The Shellguard uses a gate shield and hammer.

The Director does not need the Three-Plane Hex because the fight is mostly level and confined.

The Shellguard gains +10 Advantage to resist forced movement because they are braced. Their heavy weapon suffers no penalty because the environment supports it. If the gate begins to fail, the Director starts a Gate Collapse Clock.

Example Three: Silt and Confusion

An Arkborn Relic Scholar and a Ruin-Breaker fight in a silted vault entrance. A missed heavy attack breaks a brittle wall. The Director starts a d4 Siltstorm Clock.

Each failed movement or attack Test advances the Clock. When it fills, visibility drops to Dark. Sight-based attacks suffer −20 Disadvantage unless characters use another method.

The Relic Scholar uses Stillwater Moment to calm the silt long enough for one Lockpicking Test at the vault door.

Example Four: Harpoon Line

A Harpoon Champion strikes a large parasite attached to a mantle giant. The attack succeeds. The harpoon line catches.

The Director rules that the Champion may use Athletics to hold the line, or Tactics to direct allies into better position. The parasite attempts to dive lower on the Three-Plane Hex. The Champion braces with hook spikes and wins the Contest.

At 10+ DoS, the Champion drags the parasite one position away from the beast's vulnerable wound.

Example Five: Current Shift

A fight breaks out in a reef channel. The Director starts a d6 Current Shift Clock because nearby gates are opening and closing.

When the Clock fills, the current changes direction. All combatants must make Currentcraft or be moved one position on the Three-Plane Hex. The Director rolls randomly for two minor enemies. One is swept into coral cover. The other is pushed directly beneath the Protagonist, creating a dangerous new angle.

Optional Rule: Directional Consequences

When a failed Test creates uncertain movement, the Director may roll 1d20 and apply the result.

Examples:

- A failed Currentcraft roll moves the Protagonist to the rolled position.
- A missed thrown weapon drifts to the rolled position.
- A broken relic pulse erupts from the rolled position.
- A predator arrives at the rolled position.
- A silt cloud opens in the rolled position.

This rule is simple and useful. It makes three-dimensional combat feel alive without adding heavy tracking.

Final Guidance

Underwater combat should feel fluid, vertical, and dangerous.

Use the Three-Plane Hex when position matters. Ignore it when it does not. Let current, light, pressure, silt, blood, and terrain shape the fight. Let weapons feel different. Let armor matter when it should. Let Clocks turn violence into wider consequence.

The standard One-on-One RPG combat rules remain the foundation.

The sea provides the battlefield.

Chapter Sixteen: Clocks of Undine

The Drowned Realms rarely kill all at once.

A gate groans before it fails. A wound reddens before it blooms. A leviathan trembles before it panics. A relic hums before it wakes. The water warns those who know how to listen.

Clocks help the Director track these dangers without turning them into heavy rules. A Clock represents a threat, process, crisis, or slow-building consequence. When events worsen the situation, the Clock advances. When the Protagonist acts wisely, the Clock may pause, reduce, or close.

Clocks are especially useful in Undine because so many dangers are environmental, arcane, biological, structural, or social. They create pressure without requiring constant combat.

Clock Sizes

Use the standard One-on-One RPG Clock sizes.

- **d4 Clock**: quick, immediate, or small danger
- **d6 Clock**: standard scene or short-term crisis
- **d8 Clock**: serious ongoing threat
- **d10 Clock**: major, dangerous, or campaign-level crisis

A Clock fills when its die result or marked segments reach completion, depending on the version of the Clock rules being used. When it fills, the consequence happens.

Using Clocks in Undine

A Clock should have a clear name and consequence.

Good Clock names include:

- **Gate Collapse**
- **Predator Attention**
- **Relic Awakening**
- **Redbloom Infection**
- **Route Lost**
- **Air Vault Instability**

The Director should decide three things when creating a Clock:

1. **What advances it?**
2. **What slows or reduces it?**
3. **What happens when it fills?**

A Clock should not be secret if visible danger is part of the tension. Players should often know the water is turning bad, the gate is failing, or the creature is panicking. Hidden Clocks work best for mysteries, rituals, infection, relic awakening, and political unrest.

Advancing Clocks

A Clock may advance when:

- the Protagonist fails a relevant Test;
- the Protagonist succeeds with a cost;
- time passes;
- loud action draws attention;
- magic is used carelessly;
- pressure increases;
- a Wound is ignored;
- a relic is disturbed;
- a route is misread;
- enemies complete a step of their plan;
- the Director needs to show a worsening situation.

Degree of Failure can also matter.

- **1 DoF**: advance the Clock by 1 step
- **10+ DoF**: advance the Clock by 2 steps, or add a complication
- **15+ DoF**: advance the Clock by 3 steps, trigger a related hazard, or fill a small Clock immediately

The Director should use judgment. Clocks create tension. They should not feel like punishment for rolling.

Slowing or Reducing Clocks

A Clock may pause or reduce when the Protagonist takes meaningful action.

Examples:

- Medicine slows an Infection Clock.
- Deepworks slows a Gate Collapse Clock.
- Currentcraft avoids a Current Shift Clock.
- Wild Magic pauses a Mutation Clock.
- Relic Lore identifies what advances a Relic Awakening Clock.
- Tactics prevents Predator Attention from becoming an attack.
- Oratory reduces Settlement Unrest.
- Beast Handling calms a Leviathan Panic Clock.

The Director may reduce a Clock by 1 step for a success, 2 steps for strong success, or simply pause it for the scene if reduction does not make sense.

Pressure Failure Clock

Suggested Size: d6 or d8
Use When: a chamber, depth suit, vehicle, gate passage, descent carrier, or sealed route is losing pressure stability.

Advances When:

- a Deepworks or Crafting Test fails;
- the group ignores warning vibrations;
- the structure takes damage;

- pressure shifts suddenly;
- the Protagonist forces a door, seal, or gate;
- magic affects water pressure nearby.

When It Fills:
The structure fails. Water surges, pressure crushes inward, a chamber floods, a vehicle cracks, or everyone inside must make immediate Tests to avoid Wounds, forced movement, panic, or separation.

Ways to Slow It:
Deepworks, Crafting: Hard Materials, Pressurecraft spells, Chamber Calm, Seal the Breach, proper tools, evacuation, or controlled venting.

Arcane Exposure Clock

Suggested Size: d6, d8, or d10
Use When: the Protagonist is near unstable magic, relic residue, corrupted growth, active Redbloom, abyssal signs, or Deluge-era contamination.

Advances When:

- the Protagonist touches exposed relic matter;
- magic is cast in a contaminated area;
- protective seals fail;
- a spell fails badly;
- the character remains too long in the site;
- blood, open wounds, or living growth contact the source.

When It Fills:
The exposed character suffers a significant effect. This may be sickness, hallucinations, mutation signs, temporary penalties, a Wound, a new vulnerability, or the start of a Mutation Clock.

Ways to Slow It:
Arcane Lore, Wild Magic cleansing, Formal Magic containment, Antiseptic Brine for ordinary contamination, Relic Lore, protective gear, retreat, or sealing the source.

Mutation Clock

Suggested Size: d8 or d10
Use When: a person, beast, plant, or region begins changing due to arcane contamination, relic exposure, abyssal influence, Redbloom, or unstable Wild Magic.

Advances When:

- exposure continues;
- treatment is delayed;
- the character uses the mutation's benefit;
- healing fails;
- a spell interacts poorly with the condition;
- the source grows stronger;
- infected material is carried into new water.

When It Fills:
The mutation becomes a major condition. The subject may gain a visible deformity, dangerous trait, new hunger, social stigma, loss of control, or transformation into something no longer fully themselves.

Ways to Slow It:
Medicine, Wild Magic, Herbalism, Arcane Lore, Quiet the Red, Greenwater Rites, quarantine, removing the source, or finding a rare cure.

Redbloom Infection Clock

Suggested Size: d6 for a person, d8 or d10 for an area
Use When: Redbloom infection threatens a Wound, reef, settlement, vehicle, medicine bed, or living structure.

Advances When:

- infected material is touched or cut poorly;
- contaminated wounds are untreated;
- Redbloom Filament is mishandled;
- water carries spores or fragments onward;
- fire, blades, or magic spread the growth instead of containing it;
- the infected area is ignored.

When It Fills:
The infection takes hold. In a body, it becomes a serious medical and mutation threat. In a region, it creates hostile growth, corrupted reef, poisoned water, or a spreading outbreak.

Ways to Slow It:
Redbloom Wash, Medicine, Herbalism, Wild Magic, Redbloom Rebuke, quarantine knots, burning or cutting rites, controlled removal, and clean water flow.

Siltstorm Clock

Suggested Size: d4 or d6
Use When: silt, ash, debris, spores, or disturbed sediment begins filling the water.

Advances When:

- heavy movement disturbs the floor;
- combat erupts in loose silt;
- vehicles pass too close;
- a creature burrows or thrashes;
- a current shifts;
- an explosion, spell, or collapsing wall shakes the area.

When It Fills:
Visibility drops sharply. Ranged attacks, sight-based Tests, tracking, group movement, and communication may suffer Disadvantage. Creatures may become separated or ambushed.

Ways to Slow It:
Stillwater Moment, Currentcraft, careful movement, retreating to clearer water, using lines, light markers, or holding position until silt settles.

Predator Attention Clock

Suggested Size: d4, d6, or d8
Use When: noise, blood, light, panic, prey behavior, or magic may attract predators.

Advances When:

- characters bleed in open water;
- loud tools or weapons are used;
- Glowgel or bright light is exposed;

- dead creatures are left behind;
- panic scatters small life;
- a failed Stealth, Survival, or Currentcraft Test creates disturbance.

When It Fills:
A predator arrives, begins stalking, attacks from an unexpected direction, or forces the Protagonist into a tense escape scene.

Ways to Slow It:
Stealth, Creature Lore, Survival, masking scent, hiding light, moving with current, using decoys, or leaving the feeding ground.

Gate Collapse Clock

Suggested Size: d6 or d8
Use When: a Shellhold gate, reef gate, vault door, living threshold, or pressure lock begins failing.

Advances When:

- the gate is forced;
- enemies attack the mechanism;
- Deepworks repairs fail;
- pressure rises;
- a wrong command is used;
- relic systems interfere;
- living growth resists.

When It Fills:
The gate collapses, seals permanently, floods the area, traps someone, opens into danger, or releases what it was holding back.

Ways to Slow It:
Deepworks, Crafting: Hard Materials, Reefwork spells, Relic Lore, Pressurecraft spells, Gate Signal Shells, proper tools, and evacuation.

Air Vault Instability Clock

Suggested Size: d6, d8, or d10
Use When: an Arkborn air vault, dry chamber, atmosphere lock, sealed archive, or pressure dome begins losing stability.

Advances When:

- the chamber is opened improperly;
- air and water pressure are mismatched;
- old systems restart;
- the vault is damaged;
- fire, dust, or dry rot is disturbed;
- characters ignore Domewright warnings;
- relic systems receive wrong input.

When It Fills:
The vault floods, depressurizes, poisons its contents, collapses, locks down, releases old air, or wakes a system that should have stayed dormant.

Ways to Slow It:
Deepworks, Relic Lore, Scholar, Formal Magic, Domewright tools, Airlock Gauge Shells, pressure sealing, or retreating and closing the chamber.

Leviathan Panic Clock

Suggested Size: d8 or d10
Use When: a great beast, mantle giant, worldwhale, route beast, or large mount begins to panic.

Advances When:

- the creature is wounded;
- parasites bite deeper;
- riders fight on its body;
- loud magic is used;
- predators swarm;
- route signs are ignored;
- a Beast Handling Test fails;
- pain, infection, or mutation spreads.

When It Fills:
The leviathan dives, rolls, scrapes off platforms, flees, attacks, crushes nearby structures, or changes route violently. Anyone near it may face Currentcraft, Riding, Athletics, or Survival Tests.

Ways to Slow It:
Beast Handling, Creature Lore, Wild Magic, Beast's Shared Calm, careful removal of parasites, reducing noise, treating wounds, or evacuating the beast's body.

Route Lost Clock

Suggested Size: d6 or d8
Use When: the Protagonist risks losing a route through kelp, silt, open water, ruins, migration paths, or depth changes.

Advances When:

- Cartography or Currentcraft fails;
- landmarks shift or vanish;
- guides are injured;
- silt or darkness rises;
- enemies move route markers;
- the group ignores local warnings;
- old maps conflict with living water.

When It Fills:
The group becomes lost. They may arrive at the wrong region, enter dangerous depth, run low on supplies, lose time, encounter predators, or stumble into a hidden site.

Ways to Slow It:
Currentcraft, Cartography, Depth Lore, Kelpway guides, route knots, local testimony, Moon-Tide Mysteries, or stopping to reorient.

Ultharic Ritual Clock

Suggested Size: d8 or d10
Use When: Ultharic priests, cultists, or abyssal forces perform a rite tied to sacrifice, pressure, ink, descent, or the Sleeper Below the Silt.

Advances When:

- cultists complete a ritual step;
- sacrifices are taken;
- pressure marks are placed;
- the Protagonist delays;
- failed Tests create openings;
- abyssal signs are ignored;
- relics or blood are brought to the site.

When It Fills:
The rite completes. A gate opens, a creature awakens, a settlement is marked, victims transform, abyssal pressure spreads, or the cult gains a powerful advantage.

Ways to Slow It:
Investigation, Stealth, combat, Arcane Lore, Abyssal Rites knowledge, destroying ritual marks,

rescuing sacrifices, disrupting pressure stones, or sealing the ritual chamber.

Settlement Unrest Clock

Suggested Size: d6, d8, or d10
Use When: fear, hunger, prejudice, political pressure, disease, class conflict, or outside threat destabilizes a community.

Advances When:

- supplies fail;
- a public leader is exposed;
- prejudice is inflamed;
- Wounds or disease spread;
- rumors go unanswered;
- law is enforced unfairly;
- enemies stage incidents;
- the Protagonist fails a public social Test.

When It Fills:
The settlement erupts. Riots, purges, gate closures, faction violence, exile orders, arrests, food seizures, or mob action may follow.

Ways to Slow It:
Oratory, Persuasion, Bargain, Insight, Medicine, public proof, fair distribution, exposing agitators, or meaningful sacrifice by trusted figures.

Current Shift Clock

Suggested Size: d4, d6, or d8
Use When: local water flow is changing due to weather, pressure, gates, leviathans, magic, collapse, or deep movement.

Advances When:

- time passes;
- gates open or close;
- heavy creatures move nearby;
- Currentcraft fails;
- spells disturb water flow;
- pressure systems fail;
- storm or silt movement grows.

When It Fills:
The current changes suddenly. Characters may be moved on the Three-Plane Hex, swept into hazards, separated, denied a route, or forced to make Currentcraft Tests.

Ways to Slow It:
Currentcraft, Deepworks, Current Law spells, anchoring lines, retreating to cover, closing gates, or moving with the flow instead of against it.

Relic Awakening Clock

Suggested Size: d8 or d10
Use When: a relic, old-world system, sealed engine, vault intelligence, guardian, or dormant magical mechanism begins to wake.

Advances When:

- the relic is touched;
- commands are spoken;
- power is restored;
- Formal Magic fails;
- Relic Lore is ignored;
- seals are broken;
- old-world symbols are copied;

- blood, light, or pressure triggers the system.

When It Fills:
The relic activates. It may open, lock down, attack, speak, emit exposure, alter the environment, summon guardians, rewrite records, or resume an ancient function.

Ways to Slow It:
Relic Lore, Formal Magic, Containment Circle, Deepworks, Scholar, closing the source, removing power, restoring seals, or leaving the relic untouched.

Sample Clock in Play

A Protagonist enters an old Arkborn pressure dome beneath a Shellhold Bastion. The Director creates an **Air Vault Instability d6 Clock**.

The Clock advances when:

- the Protagonist opens sealed doors without testing them;
- old air bubbles into the water;
- a Deepworks Test fails;
- a relic system receives the wrong command;
- combat damages the dome.

The Clock slows when:

- the Protagonist uses Deepworks to stabilize a seal;
- Relic Lore identifies the correct access order;
- Formal Magic calms an old pressure line;
- the Protagonist retreats and closes a chamber.

When the Clock fills, the air vault floods and locks down. Anyone inside must escape before pressure equalizes. Records may be destroyed. Something preserved in the air may enter the water for the first time.

Final Guidance

Use Clocks to make the world feel alive.

A Clock should not only threaten damage. It should create choices. Does the Protagonist fight or repair? Push forward or retreat? Use magic or risk contamination? Save the wounded or close the gate? Trust the old map or follow the living current?

In Undine, danger often begins as a sign.

The Clock tells the table how long they have before the sign becomes the disaster.

Chapter Seventeen: Companions of Undine

A Protagonist in Undine may stand at the center of the story, but they are rarely alone in the water.

Companions are supporting characters, loyal creatures, trusted assistants, sworn guards, apprentices, guides, messengers, mounts, or strange allies who travel with the Protagonist. They are not second Protagonists. They are simpler, lighter, and focused on support. A Companion gives the player someone to care about, someone to speak with, and someone whose skills can help without taking the story away from the Protagonist.

In a one-on-one campaign, a Companion is especially useful. They can hold a lantern while the Protagonist opens a vault. They can warn of current shifts. They can carry messages through hostile water. They can help stabilize a Wound, distract a predator, remember a court title, or ask the question the Protagonist does not want to answer.

A good Companion should do three things.

First, they should support the Protagonist's weak points. A Reef Duelist may need a scholar. A Relic Scholar may need a guard. A Trench Scout may need a social voice in upper-water markets. A Green-Tide Healer may need a brave carrier, patient, or assistant.

Second, they should connect the Protagonist to the setting. A Companion may belong to another Bloodtide, owe a debt to a faction, know a route, serve a vault, carry a clan mark, or attract danger from old enemies.

Third, they should create story. A Companion should not simply provide bonuses. They should have fears, loyalties, habits, flaws, hopes, and reasons to stay.

Use the standard One-on-One RPG Companion rules in Appendix A. The entries below provide ready-to-use Companions for Undine. Each can be selected at character creation or introduced during play.

Pre-Generated Companions

Maelis Vey

Bloodtide: Arkborn
Role: Archive Assistant and Relic Reader

Best Suited For: Relic Scholars, Domewrights, Reef Duelists, Ruin-Breakers, Tide Magisters

Maelis Vey was raised in a minor Arkborn record house that specialized in damaged door lists and partial vault genealogies. She is small, sharp-eyed, and careful with her hands. Her skin is pale gray with faint blue undertones, and thin seal-like birthmarks run along her wrists. She wears a fitted archive harness with sample tubes, shell-script leaves, and a battered pearl lens she refuses to replace.

Maelis is not brave in the obvious way. She dislikes predators, hates open blackwater, and becomes very quiet near living coral that remembers too much. Yet she will put herself between a relic and a fool without hesitation. She believes bad knowledge kills more slowly than bad weapons, but kills more people in the end.

She is useful in vaults, archives, courts, ruins, and investigations. She can identify old marks, organize records, cross-reference damaged inscriptions, and remind the Protagonist that opening a sealed door is not the same as understanding it.

Useful Skills: Relic Lore 62%, Scholar 60%, Investigation 56%, Arcane Lore 52%, Cartography 48%, Concentration 44%

Companion Trait: **Careful Record-Keeper** — Maelis may Assist Tests involving old records, inscriptions, relic warnings, archive procedure, or comparing contradictory sources.

Complication: She becomes anxious when information is destroyed and may argue against burning, breaking, or abandoning records even when time is short.

Starting Gear: Pearl lens, archive harness, shell-script leaves, sealed sample tubes, small utility knife, old record cord.

Thoro Gate-Son

Bloodtide: Shellborn
Role: Shieldmate and Gate Guard
Best Suited For: Relic Scholars, Pearl Envoys, Tide Magisters, Green-Tide Healers, Abyssal Seers

Thoro Gate-Son is a broad Shellborn with thick shoulders, dark green-gray skin, and chitinous ridges along his brow and jaw. He has no shell on his back, but his body looks as if it was built by a cautious mason. He speaks plainly, watches doors, and stands in places others avoid.

Thoro served three years at a Shellhold lower gate before leaving under circumstances he does not discuss unless trust has been earned. He still keeps his gate oath plate wrapped in pressure cloth. He says he left the gate, not the duty.

As a Companion, Thoro is steady, protective, and useful when the Protagonist needs someone to hold position. He is not subtle. He is not quick with court speech. He is very good at noticing when a room has become unsafe and when someone is about to draw a weapon.

Useful Skills: Shields 62%, Blunt Weapons 58%, Athletics 56%, Danger Sense 52%, Intimidation 48%, Survival 44%

Companion Trait: **Hold the Line** — Thoro may Screen the Protagonist, block a passage, protect a wounded ally, or Assist Tests to resist forced movement.

Complication: He distrusts elegant solutions when a direct one seems available. He may push for closing a gate, sealing a chamber, or retreating before others are ready.

Starting Gear: Shell buckler, pressure baton, reinforced work harness, gate signal shell, emergency brace spikes.

Sava of the Green Knots

Bloodtide: Kelpway Clan
Role: Route Helper and Field Healer
Best Suited For: Shellguards, Harpoon Champions, Reef Duelists, Trench Scouts, Pressure Monks

Sava is a young Kelpway route-helper with olive-brown skin, long webbed fingers, and green markings painted across her cheeks and shoulders. She carries more pouches than seems reasonable. Most contain useful things. A few contain things she forgot about weeks ago.

She learned healing from her grandmother and route work from an uncle who vanished in a siltstorm. Sava is not yet a full Green-Tide Healer, but she knows enough to clean wounds, find useful growth, brew simple preparations, and tell when a route is beginning to sour.

Sava is bright, stubborn, and more perceptive than she pretends. She likes jokes, hates waste, and quietly judges anyone who cuts living growth without asking the route first. She is excellent for Protagonists who need practical support during travel.

Useful Skills: Herbalism 60%, Forage 58%, Survival 55%, Currentcraft 54%, Medicine 48%, Insight 44%

Companion Trait: Greenway Hands — Sava may Assist with field treatment, foraging, route shelter, herbal preparations, or identifying useful living growth.

Complication: She has strong feelings about living routes and may resist plans that damage kelp beds, medicine growths, or sacred plants.

Starting Gear: Herbalist's wrap, route-knot cord, seed-lamp cup, shell knife, small pouch of Bitterroot Dressing materials.

Iren Pearl-Tongue

Bloodtide: Coral Court
Role: Social Aide and Witness-Bearer
Best Suited For: Kelpstalkers, Shellguards, Trench Scouts, Ruin-Breakers, Beast-Speakers

Iren Pearl-Tongue was trained to stand beside people more important than himself and make sure they did not say ruinous things in public. He is slender, bright-eyed, and well-kept, with rose-gold skin and small pearl ornaments along his collar mantle. His smile is practiced. His fear is usually hidden.

Iren knows titles, greetings, grudges, court forms, and the small gestures that can change a negotiation. He can soften an insult before it becomes a duel, identify which noble is being ignored too loudly, and spot when a gift is actually a threat.

He is not helpless outside the court, but he is deeply uncomfortable in wild water. He complains when sleeping in kelp shelters. He also remembers names no one else bothered to learn, which has saved lives more than once.

Useful Skills: Insight 60%, Persuasion 58%, Oratory 55%, Bargain 52%, Scholar 46%, Deception 44%

Companion Trait: **Courtly Interpreter** — Iren may Assist social Tests involving etiquette, negotiation, titles, formal speech, or reading Coral Court politics.

Complication: He has enemies in at least one Coral Court house and avoids saying why.

Starting Gear: Court travel mantle, pearl token case, etiquette tablets, small court blade, formal gift-string.

Velka Deepmark

Bloodtide: Gloam-Eyed Abyssal Kin
Role: Deep Guide and Silent Watcher
Best Suited For: Coral Court characters, Arkborn, Kelpway Guides, Tide Magisters, Domewrights

Velka Deepmark has smooth charcoal-gray skin, large pupilless pale eyes, and long fingers marked with pressure tattoos. She wears a dark hood in bright water and speaks softly enough that others often lean closer without noticing.

She comes from a Gloam-Eyed settlement near the Black Reaches border. She knows deep signs, pressure warnings, silence customs, and the difference between safe darkness and hungry darkness. Upper-water folk often find her unsettling. Velka has learned to let them.

As a Companion, Velka is ideal for campaigns that descend into dangerous depth, abyssal borderlands, blackwater routes, or old sealed trenches. She is patient, observant, and difficult to surprise. She does not waste words. When she says not to go farther, wise Protagonists listen.

Useful Skills: Depth Lore 62%, Danger Sense 58%, Stealth 56%, Survival 54%, Currentcraft 50%, Tracking 46%

Companion Trait: **Blackwater Sense** — Velka may Assist Tests involving darkness, deepwater signs, pressure warnings, abyssal customs, or avoiding notice in low light.

Complication: Bright water, loud crowds, and casual disrespect toward deep taboos make her withdraw or become sharply critical.

Starting Gear: Smoked shell eye-veil, low-light marker stones, silent line, trench knife, pressure-cloth wrap.

Pip-of-the-Reef

Type: Beast Companion
Creature: Pearl-Eyed Watcher Fish
Role: Warning Pet and Scout
Best Suited For: Any Protagonist, especially solitary characters, healers, scouts, scholars, and casters

Pip is a pale watcher fish with oversized pearl-bright eyes, translucent fins, and a nervous little mouth that opens and closes whenever danger approaches. A faint silver ring circles each eye. Pip is about the length of a forearm and moves in short, quick bursts.

Watcher fish are prized because they react to motion, strange light, hidden vibration, and unfamiliar creatures before most people notice anything wrong. Pip is unusually loyal. This may be training, affection, or simple belief that the Protagonist is the safest large thing in the water.

Pip is not a fighter. Pip is a warning. The fish darts, hides, circles, flashes its eyes, and bumps

the Protagonist's hand when frightened. In calm moments, it chases light motes and tries to eat things that are not food.

Useful Skills: Awareness 60%, Danger Sense 58%, Stealth 52%, Currentcraft 46%, Survival 42%, Escape 40%

Note: For Pip, the ratings should only apply where a small watcher fish could plausibly act. It can notice, warn, hide, flee, or scout tiny spaces, but it should not perform complex tasks like a person.

Companion Trait: **Pearl-Eyed Alarm** — Pip may Assist or provide warning when hidden movement, strange light, nearby predators, or subtle vibration matters.

Complication: Pip panics easily. In predator-heavy water, bright light, or strong magic, it may hide, flee, or alert enemies by flashing too brightly.

Starting Gear: Small shell cage, feeding paste, route bead tied near its dorsal fin, tiny light marker.

Chapter Eighteen: Bestiary

The Drowned Realms are full of life.

Some of it is beautiful. Some of it is useful. Some of it is sacred. Much of it is hungry.

This bestiary presents creatures, predators, parasites, arcane mutants, relic remnants, and mythic beings that can appear in Undine: The Drowned Realms. These entries are not meant only as combat opponents. A creature may be a hazard, omen, mount, resource, mystery, guardian, disease carrier, sacred beast, or sign that something deeper has begun to move.

Each entry uses the standard One-on-One RPG creature format.

Threat indicates the general danger posed by the creature.

Wounds indicates how many Wounds the creature can sustain before being defeated, driven off, destroyed, or rendered helpless.

Armor indicates natural protection, shell, hide, magic, or construction.

Attack gives the creature's main attack and attack percentage.

Native Depth lists the Depth Band where the creature is most often found.

The Director should adjust any creature to fit the scene. A starving predator may fight recklessly. A sacred beast may flee rather than attack. A mutant specimen may have an extra Trait. A young version may have fewer Wounds. A mythic version may be far worse than the common entry.

Abyr

Common Names: glass squid, mirror squid, vault squid
Threat: Standard
Wounds: 2
Armor: 1
Attack: Hooked Tentacles 55%, 1d6+1
Native Depth: Blue Realms, Dim Roads

Description:
The Abyr is a large squidlike creature with translucent flesh, silver organs, and long hooked arms that glitter like wet glass. Its body can become nearly invisible when it drifts motionless near relic glass, ice-pale coral, or Arkborn vault walls. Its eyes are bright and ringed with tiny black spots.

Abyr are clever ambush hunters. They favor ruins, old domes, and broken vault mouths where prey focuses on doors rather than shadows. Arkborn

salvage crews hate them because Abyr sometimes collect small shiny objects and wedge them into inaccessible cracks.

Traits:

- **Glass Camouflage**: Gains +20 Advantage on Stealth in clear, reflective, or glassy environments while still.
- **Hooked Grip**: A successful tentacle attack may require the target to win Escape or Athletics to break free.
- **Vault Curiosity**: Drawn to pearls, lenses, shiny tools, and relic light.
- **Ink-Mist**: Once per scene, releases a pale cloud that imposes −10 Disadvantage on sight-based Tests nearby.

Tactics:
The Abyr waits above doors, beneath ledges, or behind glassy growth. It grabs one target, pulls them into cover, and inks the water if injured. It flees if badly wounded unless defending eggs.

Hooks:

- An Abyr has collected a key plate from an Arkborn vault.
- A glass squid nest blocks the only safe entrance to a ruin.
- Several Abyr near a relic site have begun arranging stolen objects into a repeating pattern.
- A living Abyr lens is needed for a powerful alchemical preparation.

Akhul

Common Names: pressure maw, trench crusher, deepjaw
Threat: Serious
Wounds: 4
Armor: 3
Attack: Crushing Bite 60%, 1d10+2
Native Depth: Dim Roads, Black Reaches

Description:
The Akhul is a heavy-bodied predator with a blunt head, ridged skull, and jaws built to crush shell, bone, and armor. Its hide is slate gray, black-green, or dark brown, with pale pressure scars along the sides. Its small eyes sit deep beneath bony plates.

Akhul hunt by waiting in pressure shelves and narrow descents. They attack when prey is already distracted by difficult movement. Shellborn guards respect them. Blackfin hunters sometimes take Akhul teeth as oath trophies.

Traits:

- **Crushing Bite**: On 10+ DoS, the Akhul may damage armor, shields, or carried gear.
- **Pressure-Braced Body**: Gains +10 Advantage to resist forced movement in deep or high-pressure water.
- **Ambush from Below**: Gains +10 Advantage on its first attack if rising from a lower plane.
- **Shellbreaker**: Ignores 1 point of Armor from natural shell or light armor.

Tactics:
The Akhul strikes from below or from a dark wall. It bites, shakes, and drags prey downward. If

outmatched, it retreats into cracks too narrow for larger pursuers.

Hooks:

- An Akhul has learned to wait near a damaged pressure gate.
- Shellhold workers need a route cleared before repairs can begin.
- A giant Akhul tooth bears an old carved symbol.
- A Blackfin house offers reward for the beast that killed an oath patrol.

Aruva

Common Names: ribbon ray, silk ray, mourning ray
Threat: Minor
Wounds: 1
Armor: 0
Attack: Tail Sting 40%, 1d4 plus mild venom
Native Depth: Sunlit Skin, Blue Realms

Description:
Aruva are long, delicate raylike creatures with ribbon-thin fins and trailing tails. Their bodies are pale blue, white, rose, or soft gold. When they gather in numbers, they look like torn silk moving through water.

They are not aggressive unless cornered. Many Bloodtides consider them signs of safe water, though this is only partly true. Aruva avoid strong predators, but they also gather near certain toxic blooms.

Traits:

- **Gentle School:** Groups of Aruva may grant +10 Advantage to Forage or Survival Tests to locate calm water.
- **Tail Sting:** A sting causes mild pain and −10 Disadvantage on the target's next physical Test.
- **Bloom Sense:** Aruva avoid some poisons but gather near others.
- **Fragile:** Any successful damaging attack usually drives one off or kills it.

Tactics:
Aruva flee first. If trapped, they sting and scatter. Predators sometimes use Aruva schools as cover.

Hooks:

- A beautiful Aruva migration leads toward poisoned water.
- A healer needs Aruva venom for a numbing preparation.
- A route once marked by Aruva schools has gone empty.
- A child's pet Aruva returns carrying a blood-marked ribbon.

Brineth

Common Names: brine ghoul, salt husk, drowned hunger
Threat: Serious
Wounds: 3
Armor: 1
Attack: Salt-Claw 55%, 1d8
Native Depth: Blue Realms, Dim Roads

Description:
A Brineth is a drowned corpse or near-corpse

changed by bad brine, old magic, and hunger. Its skin tightens into gray-white folds. Salt crystals grow along joints and teeth. Its eyes cloud over, but it still turns toward warmth, blood, and sound.

Brineth are not common. They appear after failed rites, cursed wrecks, old corpse-water pockets, or abandoned battle sites. Some retain fragments of habit. A Brineth guard may still drift near a gate it once protected.

Traits:

- **Salt Hunger**: Gains +10 Advantage when attacking wounded or bleeding targets.
- **Dead Nerves**: Ignores minor pain, fear, and intimidation.
- **Corpse-Brine**: A target Wounded by a Brineth risks infection or contamination if untreated.
- **Unquiet Body**: Medicine or Arcane Lore can reveal how the corpse changed.

Tactics:
Brineth move slowly until close, then lunge with sudden violence. They do not retreat from pain but can be driven off by strong light, fireburst gel, or sacred rites.

Hooks:

- A missing patrol returns as Brineth near a sealed route.
- A corpse-water pocket under a city begins producing salt husks.
- One Brineth still clutches a message case.
- A healer believes a newly changed Brineth can still be saved.

Calith

Common Names: ventglass serpent, heat snake, glasscoil
Threat: Standard
Wounds: 2
Armor: 2
Attack: Glass Bite 50%, 1d6+1
Native Depth: Dim Roads, vent fields

Description:
Calith are long serpentine creatures with translucent scales and glowing orange-red heat lines beneath the skin. Their bodies harden near vent fields, creating glassy ridges that can cut careless hands. Their eyes are black and beadlike.

They nest near warm stone and mineral vents. Shellhold crafters sometimes track Calith to find good vent deposits. The risk is that Calith defend their heat fiercely.

Traits:

- **Heat-Blooded**: Resists cold and pressure discomfort near vents.
- **Glass Ridges**: Brawling or unarmed attacks against a Calith may injure the attacker.
- **Vent Sense**: Gains +10 Advantage to hide or maneuver in vent fields.
- **Molting Shards**: Shed scales can be harvested as Saltglass-like material.

Tactics:
Calith coil near warm cracks. They strike, retreat into heated vents, then strike again from another opening. They avoid open cold water.

Hooks:

- A Calith nest surrounds a needed Deepworks vent line.
- Its glass scales are required for a light-splitting alchemical item.
- A vent field goes cold after Calith abandon it.
- A huge old Calith has grown around an Arkborn heat conduit.

Droma

Common Names: reef boar, tuskfish, stone-grazer
Threat: Standard
Wounds: 3
Armor: 2
Attack: Tusk Charge 50%, 1d8
Native Depth: Sunlit Skin, Blue Realms

Description:
Droma are large, blunt-bodied fish with bony brows, shovel jaws, and forward tusks used to scrape reef. Their hides are mottled green, gray, and white. Older Droma carry patches of coral and barnacles on their backs.

They are common around reef farms and can be domesticated with patience. Wild Droma become dangerous during mating season or when startled in confined channels.

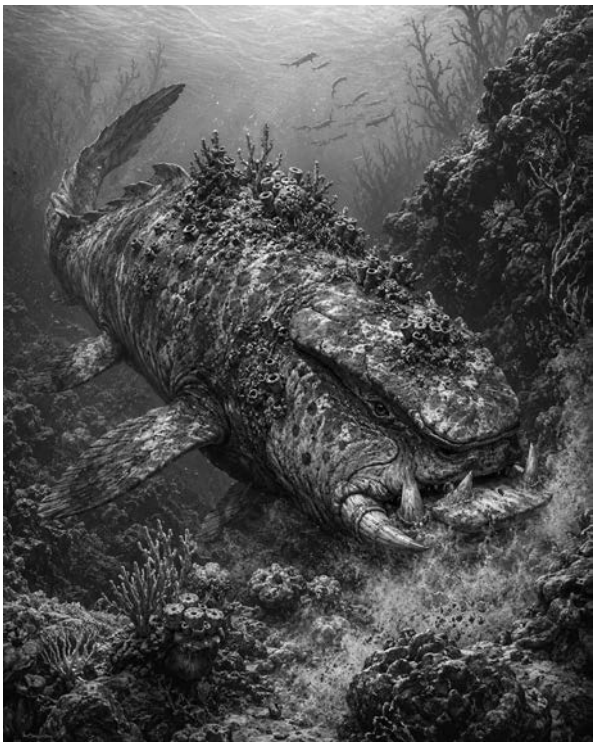
Traits:

- **Tusk Charge**: Gains +10 Advantage when charging in a straight line.
- **Reef Grazer**: Can break brittle coral, shell, and weak barriers.
- **Stubborn Bulk**: Gains +10 Advantage to resist forced movement.
- **Useful Carcass**: Provides food, hide, bone, and craft material.

Tactics:
Droma lower their heads and charge. If wounded, they thrash and try to wedge enemies against coral.

Hooks:

- A herd of Droma is destroying a Coral Court reef garden.
- A prized domestic Droma carries a hidden message tube in its horn ring.
- Something has made the reef boars violently aggressive.
- Droma bones are needed for emergency shield repairs.



Eidros

Common Names: moon jelly, dream jelly, white drift
Threat: Minor
Wounds: 1
Armor: 0
Attack: Stinging Veil 35%, 1d4
Native Depth: Blue Realms, Dim Roads

Description:
Eidros are pale jellyfish with broad bells and long trailing veils. They glow softly in blue-white pulses during moon-tide shifts. Their bodies are fragile, but their stings can cause drifting sleep, memory flashes, or mild hallucinations.

Some Migration Oracles watch Eidros movement for omens. Alchemists collect their veil threads for sleep draughts.

Traits:

- **Dream Sting**: A stung target may suffer −10 Disadvantage on Concentration or Awareness for one scene.
- **Moon-Tide Drift**: Gathers near subtle route changes.
- **Fragile Body**: Any solid hit disperses or kills it.
- **Omen Swarm**: Large groups may signal current change, death drift, or magical disturbance.

Tactics:
Eidros drift. They do not hunt, but their veils are difficult to avoid in large numbers.

Hooks:

- An Eidros bloom surrounds a route that should be empty.
- A healer needs veil threads for Rootsleep Draught.
- Anyone stung near an old ruin dreams the same door.
- A moon jelly swarm spells out a migration omen.

Hadalith

Common Names: deep stone giant, trench colossus, blackwalker
Threat: Mythic
Wounds: 8
Armor: 5
Attack: Stone-Hand Crush 70%, 2d10
Native Depth: Hadal Wounds

Description:
The Hadalith is an ancient deepwater giant with a body like black stone, plated shell, and old coral

fused into humanoid shape. Its eyes burn faintly beneath heavy ridges. It moves slowly, but each motion shifts silt and pressure around it.

No one agrees whether Hadaliths are creatures, constructs, old gods, or survivors of something before the Bloodtides. They are rarely seen. When one walks, entire regions may change.

Traits:

- **Mythic Scale:** Ordinary weapons may only harm exposed weak points or ritual wounds.
- **Pressure Wake:** Nearby characters must make Endurance or Currentcraft Tests during violent movement.
- **Ancient Memory:** Arcane Lore, Relic Lore, or Abyssal Rites may reveal signs carved into its body.
- **World-Heavy:** Immune to ordinary forced movement, fear, and restraint.

Tactics:
A Hadalith does not fight unless roused, attacked, or bound to an ancient purpose. It crushes obstacles, ignores lesser blows, and changes the battlefield by moving.

Hooks:

- A Hadalith blocks the only path into a Hadal Wound.
- Arkborn records show one standing in the same place before the Deluge.
- Ultharic priests try to wake a sleeping Hadalith.
- A city's foundations tremble when a Hadalith turns in its sleep.

Ichoran

Common Names: spellscar shark, glassblood shark, scarjaw
Threat: Serious
Wounds: 4
Armor: 2
Attack: Rending Bite 65%, 1d10+1
Native Depth: Blue Realms, Dim Roads

Description:
The Ichoran is a large sharklike predator marked by arcane scars. Its hide is dark gray or blue-black, broken by glowing cracks that pulse red, violet, or sickly green. Its teeth are uneven and sometimes translucent.

Ichoran are rare and feared because they are not merely predators. Their mutations make them unpredictable. Some are drawn to spellcasting. Others follow relic residue, blood, or Redbloom contamination.

Traits:

- **Arcane Frenzy:** Gains +10 Advantage against targets who cast magic nearby.
- **Spellscar Hide:** Reduces the first minor magical effect used against it each scene.
- **Blood Sense:** Can track wounded creatures through open water.
- **Mutated Predator:** On a failed attack against it, the Director may advance a Predator Attention or Arcane Exposure Clock if the scene fits.

Tactics:
The Ichoran circles, waits for magic or blood, then attacks with savage speed. It withdraws briefly after a strong hit, then returns from another angle.

Hooks:

- An Ichoran stalks a Tide Magister expedition.
- Its scar tissue is needed to identify a mutation source.
- A school of normal sharks has begun following a single Ichoran.
- The creature bears a relic brand from an old vault.

Kairn

Common Names: bone-crown crab, crown crab, grave crab
Threat: Standard
Wounds: 3
Armor: 4
Attack: Crushing Claw 50%, 1d8+1
Native Depth: Blue Realms, Dim Roads

Description:
Kairn are large crabs with high ridged shells that resemble crowns of bone. Their legs are thick and spined. Their coloration ranges from bone-white to rust-red and dark gray. They decorate their shells with bones, tools, and fragments scavenged from battle sites.

They are territorial scavengers. Some reef cultures consider them grave guardians. Others consider them thieves with claws.

Traits:

- **Heavy Shell**: High Armor against most physical attacks.
- **Crushing Claw**: On 10+ DoS, may damage a weapon, shield, or limb.
- **Scavenger Crown**: Often carries useful objects stuck to its shell.
- **Side-Step**: Gains +10 Advantage to reposition along the Main Plane in rocky terrain.

Tactics:
Kairn guard a chosen hollow. They snap, retreat sideways, and use their shells as cover. They rarely chase far.

Hooks:

- A Kairn carries a dead knight's oath plate on its shell.
- A grave field is overrun with bone-crown crabs.
- Shellhold children treat a local Kairn as a luck spirit.

- A giant Kairn blocks the entrance to a tomb vault.

Kavri

Common Names: spearfin tuna, silver runner, current blade
Threat: Minor
Wounds: 1
Armor: 0
Attack: Spearfin Strike 45%, 1d6
Native Depth: Sunlit Skin, Blue Realms

Description:
Kavri are large fast schooling fish with spear-shaped snouts and bright silver flanks. Blue stripes run along their sides. They flash through open water in coordinated bursts.

They are important food fish and respected by route travelers. A panicked Kavri school can injure swimmers by sheer speed and number.

Traits:

- **Swift School:** Gains +10 Advantage to flee or cross open water.
- **Spearfin Strike:** Dangerous when charging in numbers.
- **Food Source:** A successful hunt provides excellent travel food.
- **Current Sign:** Sudden school movement may reveal predators or current shifts.

Tactics:
Kavri avoid combat unless trapped or driven. In a swarm, they rush through an area and cut with their spear-like snouts.

Hooks:

- A Kavri migration has failed to arrive.
- Something is driving spearfin schools into city routes.
- A rare golden Kavri is sacred to a local clan.
- A hunter hires the Protagonist to track a poisoned school.

Kelrin

Common Names: kelp otter, green thief, frond-runner
Threat: Minor
Wounds: 1
Armor: 0
Attack: Bite 35%, 1d4
Native Depth: Sunlit Skin, Greenways

Description:
Kelrin are sleek, playful greenwater mammals with long bodies, webbed paws, and dark clever eyes. Their fur ranges from olive and brown to deep green-gray. They are social, curious, and shameless thieves.

Kelpway children often love them. Kelpway cooks often do not. Kelrin steal shellfish, shiny beads, and unsecured tools. Trained Kelrin can retrieve small objects and scout tight spaces.

Traits:

- **Clever Paws:** Can open simple containers, knots, or pouches.
- **Small and Quick:** Gains +10 Advantage to Escape or Stealth in kelp.
- **Tool Thief:** Drawn to shiny, edible, or interesting objects.
- **Trainable:** Beast Handling can teach simple retrieval or warning behavior.

Tactics:
Kelrin avoid fights. They bite only if cornered, then flee into kelp.

Hooks:

- A Kelrin steals a key moments before a vault opening.
- A trained Kelrin returns with a strange relic fragment.
- A clan's sacred shell beads vanish into a Kelrin den.
- A child asks the Protagonist to rescue a pet from a predator route.

Mavosk

Common Names: giant squid, black-arm, ship-taker
Threat: Major
Wounds: 6
Armor: 2
Attack: Crushing Arms 65%, 1d10+2
Native Depth: Dim Roads, Black Reaches

Description:
The Mavosk is a giant squid with a massive mantle, long arms, hooked suckers, and a beak strong enough to crack shell armor. Its skin shifts between red-brown, black, violet, and pale gray. Its eyes are huge and unsettlingly aware.

Mavosk are rare but not mythic. They hunt large beasts, skiffs, and careless convoys. Some Leviathan-Tide clans know rituals to ward them away. Others hunt them for ink, flesh, and beak.

Traits:

- **Many Arms:** Can grapple multiple targets or hold a vehicle while attacking.
- **Ink Flood:** Creates a large dark cloud, imposing sight penalties.
- **Crushing Grip:** Grappled targets suffer −10 Disadvantage on physical actions.
- **Deep Intelligence:** Learns from failed hunts and avoids obvious traps.

Tactics:
The Mavosk attacks from darkness, grabs the largest target, and blinds the area with ink. It tries to separate prey before killing.

Hooks:

- A Mavosk has begun attacking Shellhold cargo barges.
- Its ink is needed for an abyssal ward.
- A giant squid avoids one old ruin completely, suggesting something worse inside.
- A wounded Mavosk drifts near a city, drawing predators.

Mnemor

Common Names: pearl-eyed sentinel, memory fish, watcher
Threat: Standard
Wounds: 2
Armor: 1
Attack: Piercing Glare 50%, 1d6 psychic strain or Beak Strike 45%, 1d6
Native Depth: Blue Realms, Coral Court waters, old reef archives

Description:
Mnemor are tall, narrow fish with pale bodies, pearl-like eyes, and long trailing fins. Their eyes reflect scenes that are not always present. They

gather near old coral memory walls, witness pearls, and places of repeated oath.

They are not naturally hostile, but they defend memory-rich sites with strange intensity. Some Coral Courts keep them in legal chambers as living omens.

Traits:

- **Memory Reflection**: May reveal flashes of recent events in its eyes.
- **Piercing Glare**: On success, target suffers mental strain or −10 Disadvantage on their next Concentration Test.
- **Witness Instinct**: Becomes agitated around lies, false testimony, or altered records.
- **Archive Guardian**: Gains +10 Advantage when defending memory sites.

Tactics:
Mnemor hover silently, watching. If threatened, they flash images to disorient intruders and strike only when cornered.

Hooks:

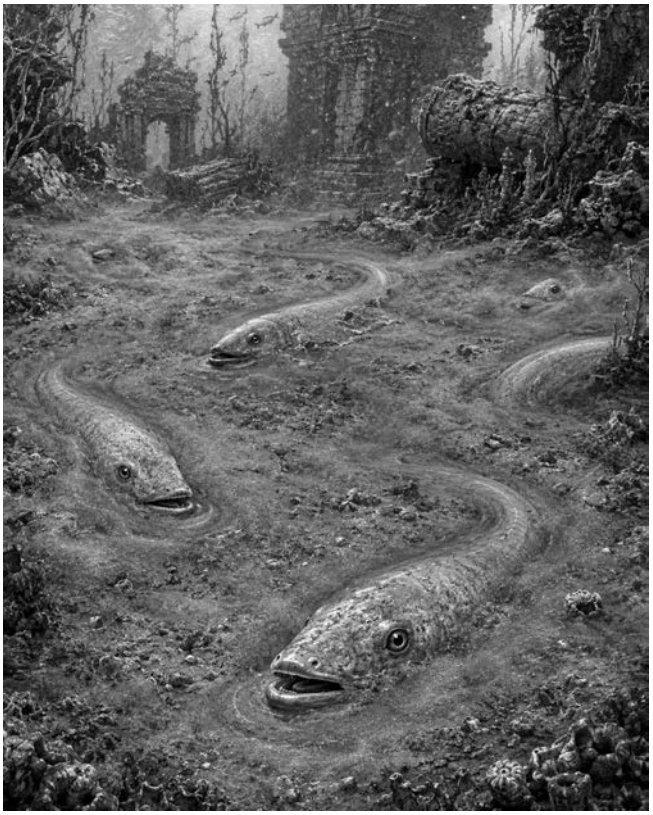
- A Mnemor shows the face of a murderer no one saw.
- A court wants a living watcher stolen from a rival archive.
- A school of Mnemor gathers at a place where no memory should remain.
- One Mnemor reflects a scene from before the Deluge.

Morl

Common Names: silt-eel, gray thread, grave eel
Threat: Minor
Wounds: 1
Armor: 0
Attack: Bite 40%, 1d4+1
Native Depth: Blue Realms, Dim Roads

Description:
Morl are long gray eels that burrow through silt with only their eyes and mouths exposed. They are thin, fast, and unpleasant to step near. Their skins are slick and almost featureless.

A single Morl is a nuisance. A nest is dangerous. They are drawn to warmth, rot, and blood in silt.



Traits:

- **Silt Burrower**: Gains +20 Advantage on Stealth while buried in soft silt.

- **Swarm Risk**: Several Morl can act as one Standard threat.
- **Blood Draw**: Gains +10 Advantage against Wounded targets in silt.
- **Slippery Body**: Gains +10 Advantage to Escape grapples or nets.

Tactics:
Morl ambush from below, bite, and vanish into silt. Swarms attack wounded or trapped prey.

Hooks:

- A ruin entrance is hidden under a Morl nesting bed.
- Silt-eels begin appearing in a clean Shellhold chamber.
- Morl castings reveal toxic residue from a nearby relic.
- A healer needs live Morl bile for a cleansing treatment.

Naluk

Common Names: armored grouper, stonefish giant, wall-mouth
Threat: Standard
Wounds: 3
Armor: 3
Attack: Sudden Bite 55%, 1d8
Native Depth: Blue Realms, reef walls

Description:
Naluk are huge reef fish with stone-colored hides, broad mouths, and heavy plates around the head. They rest motionless near walls, looking like part of the reef until something comes close. Their flesh is prized, but hunting them is risky. More than one spear fisher has mistaken a sleeping Naluk for a rock.

Traits:

- **Stone Stillness**: Gains +20 Advantage on Stealth while motionless against reef or stone.
- **Sudden Bite**: Gains +10 Advantage on the first attack against unaware prey.
- **Armored Head**: Armor increases by +1 against frontal attacks.
- **Territorial**: Attacks intruders near its resting hollow.

Tactics:
The Naluk waits, bites, and tries to swallow or crush prey against stone. It does not pursue far.

Hooks:

- A Naluk has taken residence inside a gate approach.
- Its armored plates are needed for a shield.
- A sacred Naluk is being hunted illegally.
- A stonefish giant swallowed a pearl message case.

Nerith

Common Names: giant nautilus, shell sage, spiralback
Threat: Standard
Wounds: 3
Armor: 4
Attack: Beak Snap 45%, 1d6+1
Native Depth: Blue Realms, Dim Roads

Description:
Nerith are large nautilus-like creatures with spiral shells marked in cream, brown, red, and gold. Their many small tentacles move constantly. Older Nerith shells may carry scars, barnacles, or carved marks placed by respectful travelers.

They are slow, observant, and long-lived. Some Bloodtides believe Nerith remember routes better than maps. Arkborn scholars dispute this, then quietly follow them.

Traits:

- **Heavy Shell:** Strong natural Armor.
- **Old Route Sense:** Movement may reveal safe currents or old passages.
- **Ink Pulse:** Releases a short ink burst when threatened.
- **Hard to Move:** Gains +10 Advantage to resist forced movement.

Tactics:
Nerith withdraw into their shells or drift away. If cornered, they snap and release ink.

Hooks:

- A Nerith migration reveals a lost road.
- Its shell bears carved symbols from an extinct settlement.
- A noble wants an old Nerith killed for its shell.
- A Migration Oracle claims one Nerith is avoiding a coming disaster.

Nharu

Common Names: abyssal murmur, whisper eel, cold voice

Threat: Serious
Wounds: 3
Armor: 1
Attack: Murmur Bite 50%, 1d6+1 plus fear
Native Depth: Black Reaches

Description:
The Nharu is a long pale eel with a flattened head, wide mouth, and rows of tiny black eyes along its sides. Its skin is almost translucent. It makes low vibrations that feel like words inside the bones.

Nharu hunt in dark trenches and abandoned deep routes. Their murmurs can cause panic, confusion, and false memories in exhausted travelers.

Traits:

- **Bone Murmur:** Targets hearing the murmur may suffer −10 Disadvantage on Concentration or Resolve.
- **Pale Body:** Gains +10 Advantage to Stealth in blackwater or pale silt.
- **Fear Feeder:** Gains +10 Advantage against frightened or isolated targets.
- **Echo Lure:** Can mimic distant speech or distress sounds poorly but effectively.

Tactics:
The Nharu separates prey with false sound, circles in darkness, and bites when fear rises. It avoids groups that stay calm and close.

Hooks:

- Travelers hear a lost friend calling from a trench.
- A Gloam-Eyed guide recognizes a Nharu murmur as an omen.
- A pressure stone begins vibrating with Nharu-like speech.

- An Ultharic rite uses Nharu calls to lure victims.

Ossune

Common Names: grief-ray, mourning wing, pale mantle
Threat: Standard
Wounds: 3
Armor: 1
Attack: Wing Buffet 45%, 1d6
Native Depth: Blue Realms, Dim Roads, death drifts

Description:
Ossune are broad pale rays with long trailing fins and dark eye-spots across their backs. They gather near death drifts, old battle waters, and leviathan grave paths. Their movements are slow and solemn.

Many cultures treat them as mourning creatures. Killing one without cause is taboo in several regions. They can become dangerous when protecting dead leviathan calves or grave sites.

Traits:

- **Mourning Presence**: Characters near an Ossune grave gathering may suffer −10 Disadvantage against grief, fear, or memory effects.
- **Broad Wing**: Can buffet or push nearby targets one position.
- **Death Drift Sense**: Appears near recent or coming mass death.
- **Sacred Taboo**: Harm against Ossune may create social consequences.

Tactics:
Ossune avoid violence unless disturbed near graves. They move as a group, buffet intruders, and drive them away.

Hooks:

- Ossune gather near a living city.
- A dead leviathan calf is hidden beneath a mourning ray swarm.
- A clan asks the Protagonist to investigate why the Ossune will not leave.
- One Ossune carries scars shaped like a map.

Pelora

Common Names: gloom lantern, bell jelly, ghost light
Threat: Minor
Wounds: 1
Armor: 0
Attack: Stinging Threads 35%, 1d4
Native Depth: Dim Roads, Black Reaches

Description:
Pelora are dark jellyfish with a single glowing core and long threadlike tendrils. Their bodies pulse in green, blue, or violet. They often float near ruins, trenches, and cold currents.

Travelers use Pelora clusters as signs of depth change. Predators use them as cover. Abyssal Kin know which colors mean safe passage and which mean hungry water.

Traits:

- **Cold Glow**: Provides dim light in a small area.
- **Stinging Threads**: Causes pain and −10 Disadvantage on the next delicate action if stung.

- **Depth Marker**: Clusters often indicate cold current or descent.
- **Predator Cover**: Larger predators may hide behind Pelora glow.

Tactics:
Pelora drift and sting only by contact. They become dangerous in clusters or when current pushes them into a party.

Hooks:

- Pelora lights vanish from a known descent route.
- A cluster forms a spiral around an old relic.
- A healer needs Pelora thread for a nerve treatment.
- Predators have learned to herd Pelora into travelers.

Relicant

Common Names: drowned gate warden, old guardian, vault remnant
Threat: Major
Wounds: 5
Armor: 4
Attack: Relic Strike 60%, 1d10+1
Native Depth: Any, usually ruins or vaults

Description:
A Relicant is not a species. It is an old-world guardian or preserved body bound to a relic system. Some look like armored statues. Some look like drowned soldiers with metal growth through their bones. Others are shell-white constructs with faces worn smooth.

Relicants obey old commands. This makes them dangerous. They may guard empty rooms, kill rightful heirs, protect deadly machines, or continue wars no one remembers.

Traits:

- **Old Command**: Follows a specific order unless overridden or broken.
- **Relic Body**: Resistant to ordinary pain, fear, poison, and disease.
- **Construct Armor**: High Armor against most physical attacks.
- **System Link**: Relic Lore, Deepworks, or Formal Magic may identify its command source.

Tactics:
Relicants act with cold purpose. They block, strike, seize intruders, and ignore negotiation unless the correct authority is recognized.

Hooks:

- A Relicant guards a door that should now be opened.
- Its command name is missing from the archive.
- A vault guardian protects a nursery of Redbloom.
- A Relicant mistakes the Protagonist for its old master.

Rulka

Common Names: leviathan louse, mantle tick, giant parasite
Threat: Standard
Wounds: 2
Armor: 2
Attack: Anchoring Bite 50%, 1d6+1
Native Depth: Leviathan routes, Blue Realms, Dim Roads

Description:
Rulka are large parasites that cling to leviathans, route beasts, and great rays. Their bodies are flat, armored, and oval, with hooked legs and a circular biting mouth. They range from hand-sized to the size of a small shield.

A few Rulka are normal. A bloom can sicken a leviathan and threaten entire route camps.

Traits:

- **Anchoring Bite:** Attaches to a target; removing it requires Athletics, Medicine, Beast Handling, or Blades.
- **Parasite Armor:** Hard upper shell protects against weak attacks.
- **Blood Drain:** A prolonged attachment may advance a Leviathan Panic or Beast Sickness Clock.
- **Valuable Shell:** Carapace can be used in armor and alchemy.

Tactics:
Rulka cling and feed. If removed, they curl defensively or bite the nearest warm body.

Hooks:

- A mantle giant arrives covered in Rulka.
- A Beast-Speaker hires the Protagonist to remove parasites without panicking the host.
- Mutated Rulka begin feeding on Shellhold gate seals.
- Rulka shells carry traces of an unknown abyssal route.

Sableth

Common Names: black ray, nightwing, abyss manta
Threat: Serious
Wounds: 4
Armor: 1
Attack: Shadow Tail 55%, 1d8 plus poison
Native Depth: Dim Roads, Black Reaches

Description:
Sableth are large black rays with wide wings, pale underbellies, and long venomous tails. White speckling across their backs resembles distant stars. They move with eerie silence.

They are respected by Abyssal Kin and feared by upper-water travelers. Some Blackfin Houses

train smaller Sableth as dangerous mounts, though the practice is not for the foolish.

Traits:

- **Silent Glide:** Gains +20 Advantage on Stealth in dim or dark water.
- **Venom Tail:** A Wounded target may suffer poison effects if untreated.
- **Wide Wing:** Can sweep past and force Currentcraft to keep position.
- **Darkwater Native:** Ignores most low-light penalties.

Tactics:
Sableth circle in darkness, strike with the tail, and retreat into shadow. They prefer to weaken prey before closing.

Hooks:

- A trained Sableth kills its rider and returns to wild routes.
- A Blackfin house seeks a rare star-speckled specimen.
- Sableth gather above a newly opened trench.
- Its venom is needed to prepare a dangerous antidote.

Syrn

Common Names: warning shrimp, snapper, red claw
Threat: Minor
Wounds: 1
Armor: 1
Attack: Snap Claw 35%, 1d4
Native Depth: Sunlit Skin, Blue Realms

Description:
Syrn are small bright shrimp with oversized snapping claws. They are red, orange, blue, or white, often with striped tails. Their snap can be heard through nearby water and felt through stone.

They are common pets and warning animals. Shellhold workers keep them near pressure seams. Kelpway scouts use them to sense approaching predators.

Traits:

- **Pressure Snap:** Reacts to sudden pressure shifts or nearby movement.
- **Tiny Body:** Hard to hit unless cornered.
- **Warning Animal:** May grant +10 Advantage to notice an approaching hazard if trained.
- **Startle Noise:** Its snap can reveal hidden parties.

Tactics:
Syrn flee or snap when startled. They are not combat threats unless in swarms.

Hooks:

- Every warning shrimp in a settlement begins snapping at once.
- A trained Syrn refuses to enter a safe route.
- A child's pet shrimp detects a hidden relic pulse.
- Smugglers use Syrn snaps as coded signals.

Thalassor

Common Names: worldwhale, elder whale, moving island
Threat: Mythic
Wounds: 10+
Armor: 4
Attack: Tail Wake 70%, 2d10 or Crushing Movement
Native Depth: Blue Realms, Dim Roads, open migration routes

Description:
Thalassor are immense whale-like leviathans large enough to carry reef growth, parasite fields, platforms, shrines, and sometimes whole communities along their backs and flanks. Their skin is blue-gray, black, white-scarred, or mottled with old route marks. Their voices travel farther than most maps.

They are not ordinary monsters. A Thalassor is a route, resource, omen, settlement, danger, and living history. Killing one is almost never a simple hunt.

Traits:

- **Leviathan Scale**: Ordinary combat affects only local weak points, parasites, or exposed wounds.
- **World Wake**: Movement can force Currentcraft Tests across a wide area.
- **Living Route**: Carries creatures, settlements, shrines, parasites, and history.
- **Ancient Memory**: Beast-Speakers, Migration Oracles, or Wild Magic may read signs from scars or behavior.

Tactics:
A Thalassor does not fight small foes unless panicked, corrupted, or attacked in a vulnerable place. Its movement is the danger.

Hooks:

- A worldwhale turns away from its ancient route.
- A settlement on its back vanishes.
- Ultharic marks appear on its scars.
- A Migration Oracle believes it remembers the first ark.

Thalvek

Common Names: armored shark, shellshark, gate shark
Threat: Serious
Wounds: 4
Armor: 3
Attack: Tearing Bite 60%, 1d10
Native Depth: Blue Realms, Dim Roads

Description:
Thalvek are broad sharks with natural armor plates along the head, spine, and flanks. Their coloration ranges from slate blue to dark green and bone gray. They are less fast than other sharks but far harder to kill.

They often hunt near gates, wrecks, and Shellhold refuse routes. Some guards call them gate sharks because they learn where injured or discarded things drift.

Traits:

- **Armored Hide**: Strong natural Armor against most attacks.

- **Gate Scavenger**: Drawn to blood, waste, and damaged routes.
- **Battering Body**: May force a target one position on the Three-Plane Hex on 10+ DoS.
- **Thick Skull**: Resists stunning, fear, and minor impact effects.

Tactics:
The Thalvek circles, rams, bites, and returns. It is patient and difficult to scare away.

Hooks:

- A gate shark has learned to attack during shift changes.
- Its armored plates are needed for a Shellhold shield.
- A group of Thalvek guard a sunken cargo frame.
- A shark carries old metal embedded in its jaw.

Ulvek

Common Names: ink priest's hound, dark servant, trench familiar
Threat: Standard
Wounds: 2
Armor: 1
Attack: Tendril Bite 55%, 1d6+1
Native Depth: Black Reaches, Hadal Wounds

Description:
Ulvek are lean abyssal creatures with long bodies, soft tendrils, and dark hides that leak ink when cut. Their heads are narrow and eyeless, with pale sensory pits along the jaw. They are often found near Ultharic sites.

Some serve priests as hunting beasts or ritual guardians. Others may be wild things drawn to the same pressures and offerings.

Traits:

- **Ink Blood**: When Wounded, creates a dark cloud around itself.
- **Scent of Rite**: Gains +10 Advantage to track blood, sacrifice, or ritual residue.
- **Eyeless Hunter**: Ignores many sight-based penalties.
- **Abyssal Bond**: May act in coordination with Ultharic priests or ritual sites.

Tactics:
Ulvek hunt in pairs, circling silently before striking. They bite, ink the water, and retreat toward prepared ground.

Hooks:

- Ulvek tracks appear near a settlement far above their native depth.
- A captured Ulvek refuses food but reacts to a pressure stone.
- Several dark servants guard an incomplete ritual.
- An Ulvek carries a swallowed shell token from a missing envoy.

Vaska

Common Names: giant octopus, stone-arm, red mantle
Threat: Serious
Wounds: 4
Armor: 1
Attack: Crushing Tentacles 60%, 1d8+1
Native Depth: Sunlit Skin, Blue Realms, Dim Roads

Description:
Vaska are large octopus creatures with thick arms, clever eyes, and skin that shifts through red, brown, gray, and mottled green. They can squeeze into openings far smaller than their size suggests.

They are intelligent predators and scavengers. Some avoid Bloodtide settlements. Others learn that unattended tools, shellfish pens, and small pets are easy prey.

Traits:

- **Many Arms**: Can grapple, manipulate, or restrain several objects or targets.
- **Color Shift**: Gains +10 Advantage to Stealth against reef, stone, or wreckage.
- **Soft Escape**: Gains +20 Advantage to squeeze through narrow spaces.
- **Tool Curiosity**: May open simple latches or steal objects.

Tactics:
The Vaska hides, grabs, and pulls prey into a den. If injured, it releases ink and escapes through cracks.

Hooks:

- A Vaska has learned to open Shellhold storage cages.
- Its den contains stolen relic fragments.
- A Kelpway clan considers one old octopus a route spirit.
- A child insists the "red mantle" is trying to warn the settlement.

Veyra

Common Names: glassfin swarm, shimmerfish, knife school
Threat: Standard as swarm
Wounds: 2
Armor: 0
Attack: Cutting Swarm 55%, 1d6+1
Native Depth: Sunlit Skin, Blue Realms

Description:
Veyra are tiny translucent fish with glasslike fins and reflective sides. Alone, they are harmless. In a frightened or hunting swarm, they move like a sheet of knives.

They glitter beautifully in bright water. Many travelers mistake that beauty for safety.

Traits:

- **Swarm Body**: Attacks affect the swarm as a whole rather than individuals.
- **Cutting Fins**: Damages exposed skin, soft gear, and delicate bindings.
- **Light Flash**: In bright water, may impose −10 Disadvantage on sight-based Tests nearby.
- **Predator Panic**: Swarms often signal a larger predator nearby.

Tactics:
Veyra rush through targets, cut, scatter, and reform. They avoid heavy armor and strong current.

Hooks:

- A Veyra swarm blocks a shallow route.
- Their sudden panic warns of an unseen hunter.
- Alchemists need their fins for GlassFlash Capsules.
- A swarm keeps circling the same empty patch of water.

Yssik

Common Names: giant moray, reef snake, cavejaw
Threat: Serious
Wounds: 3
Armor: 1
Attack: Locking Bite 60%, 1d10
Native Depth: Sunlit Skin, Blue Realms, Dim Roads

Description:
Yssik are huge moray-like eels with thick bodies, patterned skin, and jaws that lock around prey. Their colors vary by region: green-black, gold-brown, blue-gray, or red-spotted. They nest in reef holes, ruin cracks, and old pipes.

A Yssik can become a local terror if it learns to hunt near a route. Some are trained from youth by very brave handlers.

Traits:

- **Locking Bite**: On 10+ DoS, the target must win Athletics, Escape, or Blades to break free.
- **Cave Ambusher**: Gains +10 Advantage when attacking from a hole, pipe, or crack.
- **Territorial Den**: Fights fiercely near its lair.
- **Hard to Pursue**: Retreats into narrow passages that larger creatures cannot enter.

Tactics:
The Yssik strikes from a den, locks on, and drags prey backward. It rarely leaves its territory unless starving.

Hooks:

- A giant moray has taken over a city drainage route.
- Its den contains bones and a noble signet.
- A handler wants help capturing a young Yssik alive.
- Something has driven several Yssik out of their reef holes at once.

Chapter Nineteen: Arcane Exposure & Mutation

Magic did not leave the Drowned Realms when the old world sank.

It soaked into reef, bone, blood, stone, vault-metal, pearl memory, pressure vents, and living water. Most places are safe enough to survive. Some are not. Redbloom reefs, spellwater storms, Deluge wounds, old-world engines, abyssal shrines, and relic vaults can change those who remain too long.

Mutation is not always immediate. It begins as pressure behind the eyes. A strange taste in the water. A pulse under the skin. A scar that glows when no light touches it. A dream shared by everyone who slept in the same chamber.

The Director should use mutation carefully. It is a powerful theme, not a random punishment. Exposure should create dread, choices, marks, consequences, and story.

Arcane Exposure Clocks

An **Arcane Exposure Clock** is used when a character enters a magically contaminated area, handles unstable relic matter, suffers contact with corrupted growth, or remains near an active source of old-world magic.

Common sources include:

- Redbloom Reef;
- corrupted coral beds;
- spellwater storms;
- abyssal vents;
- relic vaults;
- old-world engines;
- Deluge wounds;
- god-corpses;
- tainted bloodlines;
- arcane mutation zones;
- failed ritual sites;
- living structures gone wrong.

The Clock size depends on the intensity of the exposure.

Clock	Exposure Severity
d4	Minor contaminated area
d6	Active mutation zone
d8	Ruined arcane engine, cursed reef,

Clock	Exposure Severity
	abyssal shrine
d10	Deluge wound, god-corpse, world-breaking relic

The Director may keep the Clock visible or hidden. Visible Clocks create tension. Hidden Clocks work best when the characters do not yet realize the water itself is changing them.

What Advances the Clock

An Arcane Exposure Clock may advance when:

- a character remains in the contaminated area;
- a failed Test stirs the source;
- a spell is cast nearby;
- blood enters the water;
- a Wound is exposed to contaminated water;
- a relic is touched, opened, moved, or activated;
- Redbloom is cut, burned, or disturbed improperly;
- a character breathes spellwater or corpse-brine;
- pressure changes awaken old magic;
- a protective seal breaks;
- a character uses a mutation's benefit;
- the Director needs to show that the place is worsening.

Degree of Failure may increase advancement.

- **1 DoF**: advance the Clock by 1 step.
- **10+ DoF**: advance the Clock by 2 steps or add a minor complication.
- **15+ DoF**: advance the Clock by 3 steps, trigger a mutation sign, or fill a small Clock immediately.

What Slows the Clock

A character may slow, pause, or reduce an Arcane Exposure Clock through meaningful action.

Possible actions include:

- leaving the contaminated area;
- sealing the source;
- using Arcane Lore to identify safe handling;
- using Relic Lore to understand the relic's trigger;
- using Deepworks to shut down an old system;
- using Medicine to protect an exposed Wound;
- using Herbalism to clean or bind contaminated tissue;
- using Alchemy to apply a prepared cleansing item;
- using Wild Magic to soothe living corruption;
- using Formal Magic to contain a structured source;
- using Redbloom Wash, Quiet the Red, Redbloom Rebuke, or similar effects.

A success may pause the Clock for one scene, reduce it by 1 step, or prevent the next advancement. A strong success may reduce it by 2 steps or reveal the safest way to end the exposure.

When the Clock Fills

When an Arcane Exposure Clock fills, the exposed character suffers a consequence. The consequence should fit the source.

A minor contaminated area may cause a temporary sign. A cursed reef may wound or infect. A Deluge wound may mark the character in a way that matters for the rest of the campaign.

Possible consequences include:

- temporary sensory mutation;
- Light Wound or Moderate Wound;
- distorted breathing;
- pressure sensitivity;
- glowing blood;
- coral growth;
- gill pain or strange coloration;
- altered voice;
- luminous scars;
- nightmares;
- unwanted magical signal;
- monster attraction;
- social stigma;
- a new vulnerability;
- a Mutation Clock;
- permanent mutation, if the campaign wants that level of transformation.

The Director should choose or roll. If a consequence would change the character permanently, the player should understand the stakes before that point whenever possible.

Exposure Consequence Table

Roll 1d20 or choose.

d20	Consequence
1	**Strange Taste**: The character tastes salt, blood, metal, or flowers for the next day. −10 Disadvantage on one Concentration Test if the sensation matters.
2	**Light in the Veins**: Blood, scars, or gills glow faintly for one scene. Stealth may suffer if hiding in darkness.
3	**Pressure Ache**: The character suffers −10 Disadvantage on the next Endurance or Currentcraft Test involving depth.
4	**Dream Residue**: The character suffers strange dreams during the next rest. Recovery is possible, but the Director may reveal a troubling image.
5	**Sensory Bloom**: The character briefly hears current, pressure, or distant movement too clearly. Gain +10 Advantage on one Awareness or Danger Sense Test, then suffer −10 Disadvantage on the next Concentration Test.
6	**Gill Burn**: Breathing becomes painful. The character suffers −10 Disadvantage on hard physical actions for one scene.
7	**Coral Flecks**: Tiny coral-like growths appear near a Wound, scar, or joint. Medicine or Wild Magic is needed to remove them cleanly.
8	**Monster Scent**: Predators or parasites become more likely to notice the character. Start or advance a Predator Attention Clock.
9	**Wrong Reflection**: Pearl, glass, or still water reflects the character incorrectly for one day. Insight or Arcane Lore may reveal meaning.
10	**Body Chill**: The character becomes cold and slow. −10 Disadvantage on one Grace or Might-based Test.
11	**Spellmark**: The character emits a faint

d20	Consequence
	magical signal tied to the exposure source. Relics, mutants, or cultists may notice.
12	**Red Flush**: The skin, scales, or gills redden along branching lines. Start a Redbloom Infection Clock if the source involved Redbloom.
13	**Memory Leak**: The character briefly remembers something that did not happen to them. The Director may offer a clue or false echo.
14	**Pressure Hunger**: The character feels pulled toward deeper or shallower water, depending on the source. Resisting during stress may require Resolve.
15	**Living Scar**: A scar, tattoo, ridge, or old mark shifts shape. It may become a clue, warning, or social problem.
16	**Arcane Fever**: The character cannot safely attempt Recovery until treated with Medicine, Wild Magic, Herbalism, or suitable Alchemy.
17	**Mutating Wound**: One existing Wound becomes contaminated. Its next Recovery Test may be delayed until the contamination is addressed.
18	**Hostile Attention**: Something connected to the source notices the character. This may be a creature, relic system, cult, spirit, or old command.
19	**Moderate Harm**: The character suffers a Light Wound, or a Moderate Wound if already injured or deeply exposed.
20	**Mutation Seed**: Begin a Mutation Clock tied to the source. The character is not transformed yet, but something has taken root.

Mutation Clocks

An **Arcane Exposure Clock** tracks contact with danger.

A **Mutation Clock** tracks what happens after that danger begins changing a body, beast, plant, region, or object.

Use a Mutation Clock when exposure has taken root.

Common causes include:

- Redbloom entering a Wound;
- relic contamination changing flesh;
- abyssal pressure marking the body;
- old-world magic altering blood or bone;
- a failed healing rite;
- contact with a god-corpse;
- long-term residence in a cursed reef;
- repeated use of a dangerous mutation benefit.

Mutation Clock Size

Clock	Mutation Severity
d4	Minor temporary mutation
d6	Serious but treatable mutation
d8	Major transformation risk
d10	Campaign-level corruption or mythic change

The Clock advances when the mutation is ignored, stressed, fed, used, or exposed again. It slows when treated, cleansed, stabilized, or understood.

What Advances a Mutation Clock

A Mutation Clock may advance when:

- the character fails a Recovery Test involving the affected area;
- the character suffers another Wound;
- the character uses the mutation's benefit;

- the character returns to the exposure source;
- contaminated water enters the body;
- magic is cast through or near the mutation;
- the character sleeps in a contaminated area;
- the character refuses treatment;
- the mutation is cut out poorly;
- the Director wants the mutation to press the story forward.

What Slows a Mutation Clock

A Mutation Clock may slow or reduce when:

- Medicine treats the affected tissue;
- Wild Magic soothes living corruption;
- Herbalism applies a correct preparation;
- Alchemy neutralizes a specific contaminant;
- Arcane Lore identifies the mutation's nature;
- Relic Lore identifies the source;
- Redbloom Wash reveals the spread;
- Quiet the Red pauses the Clock;
- Redbloom Rebuke forces corruption back;
- the character avoids triggering conditions;
- a rare cure, ritual, or surgery is found.

A successful treatment may pause the Clock. A strong success may reduce it. A failed treatment may do nothing or advance it.

Mutation Stages

A Mutation Clock can be described in stages.

Stage One: Sign

The body shows something strange. A glow, rash, taste, dream, tremor, or small growth appears. The sign is usually temporary if treated.

Stage Two: Strain

The mutation affects function. Breathing, pressure tolerance, sleep, movement, senses, or social interaction becomes difficult. Mechanical penalties may appear.

Stage Three: Change

The mutation grants a dangerous alteration or creates a serious impairment. This may include a new ability, vulnerability, visible transformation, or recurring compulsion.

Stage Four: Claim

The mutation becomes part of the character, creature, or region. Reversal may require a major quest, rare medicine, Wild Magic, relic intervention, or a costly ritual.

Not every Mutation Clock needs all four stages. Small Clocks may move from Sign to Strain and end. Major Clocks may shape an entire campaign.

Beneficial Mutations

Some mutations offer benefits.

This is dangerous by design.

A character may gain a temporary useful effect from exposure, such as:

- seeing in darkness;

- sensing pressure shifts;
- resisting cold;
- breathing bad water;
- intimidating mutated creatures;
- growing coral armor;
- hearing relic signals;
- moving through Redbloom safely for a short time.

Using that benefit may advance the Mutation Clock.

The player should face a choice: accept help now and risk change later, or resist the mutation and remain safer.

Sample Temporary Mutations

Use these for minor exposure, early Clock results, or short-term effects.

d10	Temporary Mutation
1	**Glowblood**: The character emits dim light through veins or gills. Useful for seeing, bad for hiding.
2	**Pressure Ear**: The character gains +10 Advantage to notice pressure shifts for one scene, then suffers a headache.
3	**Coral Knuckles**: Unarmed strikes feel harder for one scene, but delicate hand work suffers −10 Disadvantage.
4	**Silt Tongue**: The character can taste recent movement in silt, gaining +10 to one Tracking or Investigation Test.
5	**Red Thread**: A red line points faintly toward the contamination source. It fades after a scene.
6	**Glass Eye**: The character sees faint arcane residue but suffers discomfort in bright light.
7	**Cold Blood**: The character resists cold for one scene but suffers −10 Disadvantage in warm upper waters afterward.
8	**Reefskin**: Skin hardens briefly, granting +1 Armor for one scene, then cracks painfully.
9	**Dream Breath**: The character can remain calm during one fear or panic effect, then suffers strange dreams.
10	**Wrong Voice**: The character's voice carries strangely far. Useful for signals, dangerous near predators or enemies.

Permanent Mutations

Permanent mutation should not be casual.

Use permanent mutation only when:

- the campaign wants body transformation as a major theme;
- the player accepts that risk;
- the source is powerful enough;
- the Clock filled after several warnings;
- the mutation creates story rather than simply punishment.

A permanent mutation may be physical, social, sensory, magical, or spiritual.

Examples include:

- coral ridges that never fully vanish;
- glowing blood;
- altered gills;
- pressure sensitivity;
- deepwater eyes;
- reefskin patches;
- a voice that attracts certain creatures;

- a hand that can feel relic pulses;
- nightmares near Deluge sites;
- a mark recognized by Ultharic priests;
- a vulnerability to certain magic;
- a visible Redbloom scar that never heals.

The Director should discuss the tone of permanent mutation before using it heavily.

Redbloom Reef

Redbloom Reef is one of the most important mutation hazards in Undine.

It is beautiful at a distance. Red branches move like veins. Coral fans open like wounds. Small lights pulse beneath the surface. Fish avoid some patches and swarm around others. The water feels warm where it should not.

Redbloom is not merely infection. It is reef, disease, hunger, and magic moving together.

Redbloom Exposure

Use a **Redbloom Infection Clock** when a character is cut, stung, scraped, or exposed to Redbloom tissue.

Use an **Arcane Exposure Clock** when the party spends time inside a Redbloom zone, disturbs the reef, casts magic there, or opens a structure consumed by it.

Use a **Mutation Clock** when Redbloom enters a body and begins changing it.

Redbloom Effects

Redbloom may cause:

- red branching marks;
- fever;
- coral growth in Wounds;
- attraction from reef predators;
- false healing;
- pain that comes and goes with current;
- dreams of warm red water;
- difficulty recovering without treatment;
- increased sensitivity to magic;
- eventual transformation into hostile reef growth or mutated flesh.

Redbloom Treatment

Treating Redbloom may involve:

- Medicine to cut out or clean infected tissue;
- Herbalism to apply Redbloom Wash;
- Wild Magic to slow living corruption;
- Formal Magic to reveal or contain structured reef corruption;
- Arcane Lore to understand the infection's source;
- Deepworks if the Redbloom is inside a gate, pump, or pressure system;
- quarantine to prevent spread.

A minor Redbloom case may be slowed or cured with proper treatment.

A major case may require rare materials, a Green-Tide Healer, a Coral Court Reefwork specialist, or destruction of the source growth.

Mutation in Regions

Mutation can affect places, not only people.

A reef, ruin, gate, medicine bed, leviathan wound, vault, or settlement may gain a Mutation Clock.

When a regional Mutation Clock advances, the place changes.

Possible signs include:

- coral grows into doors;

- water warms or chills;
- lights pulse in stone;
- animals avoid the area;
- plants bear eyes or teeth;
- tools rust overnight;
- old memories leak from walls;
- Wounds reopen near the site;
- maps become inaccurate;
- pressure changes without cause.

When the Clock fills, the region becomes permanently altered unless major action is taken.

Running Mutation Fairly

Mutation should create tension, not resentment.

Use these principles.

Warn First

Show signs before serious change. Let players see red marks, strange water, altered animals, bad dreams, or glowing blood before irreversible consequences.

Offer Choices

A character should often choose whether to stay, touch, cast, cut, open, or use the mutation's benefit.

Make Treatment Possible

Even if treatment is hard, there should be a path: healer, relic, ritual, cure, rare material, or dangerous bargain.

Let Mutation Reveal Story

Mutation should point toward the setting's mysteries. A scar may become a map. A nightmare may reveal a vault. A growth may show that the old world is not dead.

Use Permanent Change Sparingly

Permanent mutation is powerful. Use it when it suits the campaign tone and the player is ready for that kind of story.

Example: Redbloom Cut

A Protagonist is cut while exploring Redbloom Reef. The Director starts a **Redbloom Infection d6 Clock**.

The Clock advances when:

- the character keeps traveling without treatment;

- the Wound is exposed to more Redbloom water;
- a Medicine Test fails;
- the character casts magic through the infected limb;
- the party sleeps inside the reef.

The Clock slows when:

- the wound is cleaned with Redbloom Wash;
- Medicine removes embedded coral fragments;
- Wild Magic pauses the living growth;
- the group leaves the reef;
- Arcane Lore identifies the infection pattern.

When the Clock fills, the Director starts a **Mutation d6 Clock**. The character develops red branching marks under the skin. The marks grant a faint sense of nearby Redbloom, but using that sense advances the Mutation Clock.

The player now has a choice.

The mark is useful.

The mark is growing.

Redbloom and Magic

Redbloom is not passive corruption.

It reacts.

The reef listens through root, branch, wound, pulse, and blood-warm current. It does not think like a person. It may not think at all in any ordinary sense. But it answers certain kinds of power. Wild Magic is especially dangerous near Redbloom because Wild Magic speaks through the same living channels Redbloom has already infected.

A Greenwater Rite may soothe a wound, but Redbloom may feel the healing and grow toward it. A Brine Rite may bind bleeding, but Redbloom may taste the blood and answer. A Moon-Tide working may read a route, but Redbloom may bend the signs with its own hunger.

This does not mean Wild Magic cannot be used against Redbloom. It often must be. But every use carries risk.

Casting Wild Magic Near Redbloom

When a character casts **Wild Magic** in or near an active Redbloom area, the Director may advance an **Arcane Exposure Clock**, **Redbloom Infection Clock**, or regional **Mutation Clock**.

Use this when the spell is cast:

- inside a Redbloom reef;
- near active Redbloom growth;
- on a Wound contaminated by Redbloom;
- while touching infected coral, root, or water;
- while blood is present in contaminated water;
- in a chamber where Redbloom has entered walls, gates, or living systems.

As a simple rule, each Wild Magic casting near active Redbloom advances the relevant Clock by **1 step**, unless the spell is specifically designed to conceal, calm, contain, or resist Redbloom.

If the Wild Magic Test fails, advance the Clock by **1 additional step**.

If the Wild Magic Test fails by **10+ DoF**, the Director may advance the Clock by **2 additional steps**, create a Redbloom reaction, or cause the spell to twist.

If the Wild Magic Test succeeds by **10+ DoS**, the caster may prevent the automatic Clock advancement, provided the spell's purpose is cleansing, calming, healing, concealment, or containment.

Redbloom Reactions

When Redbloom reacts to Wild Magic, choose or roll 1d10.

d10	Redbloom Reaction
1	The coral pulses red and reveals the caster's position.
2	Nearby branches grow toward the spell's target.
3	Spores release into the water, advancing exposure or infection.
4	A Wound treated by the spell burns, glows, or briefly reopens.
5	Predators or Redbloom-touched creatures become aware of the magic.
6	The spell works, but leaves a faint red mark on the caster or target.
7	The Redbloom imitates the spell's effect in a harmful or false way.
8	A nearby living structure roots, seals, or shifts unexpectedly.
9	The caster hears a voice, memory, or plea from within the reef.
10	Begin or advance a Mutation Clock tied to the caster, target, or location.

Wild Magic Used Against Redbloom

Wild Magic remains one of the best tools for fighting Redbloom, but it is not safe.

Spells such as **Quiet the Red**, **Wake the Safe Bloom**, **Green-Knit Flesh**, and other Greenwater Rites may slow infection, reveal corrupted tissue, or help a patient survive. These spells do not automatically trigger Redbloom in the same way as ordinary Wild Magic, but they still carry risk if the casting fails.

When a Wild Magic spell is specifically meant to treat, cleanse, slow, or understand Redbloom:

- On success, resolve the spell normally.
- On **10+ DoS**, the caster may also prevent one Redbloom Clock from advancing this scene.
- On failure, the relevant Redbloom Clock advances by 1 step.
- On **10+ DoF**, the Redbloom reacts strongly and the Director may roll on the Redbloom Reaction table.

Formal Magic Near Redbloom

Formal Magic is less attractive to Redbloom than Wild Magic, but still dangerous.

Formal Magic may disturb Redbloom when it affects structure, reef, pressure, relic systems, or containment. Reefwork is especially risky because it touches the same living coral structures Redbloom corrupts.

When casting **Formal Magic** in an active Redbloom area, advance a relevant Clock only if:

- the spell affects coral, reef, growth, Wounds, pressure, or living structure;
- the spell fails;
- the spell uses Reefwork;
- the spell opens, seals, or disturbs an infected chamber;

- the caster uses magic aggressively against Redbloom.

Reefwork spells near Redbloom are always risky. Redbloom may answer them as if they were Wild Magic unless the caster takes special precautions.

Redbloom as Living Hazard

Redbloom should make magic feel tense.

A healer may need Wild Magic to save a patient, but casting may draw the reef's attention. A Tide Magister may use Reefwork to seal a living gate, but the Redbloom inside may respond. A desperate Protagonist may cast anyway because the alternative is death.

That is the correct feeling.

Redbloom is not just an obstacle.

It is a living consequence of the world's oldest mistake.

Expanding Arcane Mutation

The old magic did not simply create monsters.

It became weather. It entered coral. It settled into bloodlines. It changed how some creatures dream, breed, heal, see light, sense pressure, and remember. Thousands of years have passed since the Deluge, and in that time arcane mutation has become part of the world's ecology.

This matters for Undine because the Drowned Realms should never feel like a world of ordinary sea life with humanoid cultures placed inside it. The apocalypse changed the rules of life. Some changes are stable. Some are sacred. Some are useful. Some are feared. Some are still spreading.

Arcane mutation can affect:

- bloodlines;
- coral growth;
- ruins;
- weather;
- currents;
- monsters;
- disease;
- pressure adaptation;
- light perception;
- memory;
- reproduction;
- dreams;
- magic itself.

A mutation may be a curse in one region and a holy mark in another. A glowing scar may get a traveler exiled from a Shellhold infirmary but welcomed by a deepwater seer. A coral growth may be a lethal infection in the body, a useful reef adaptation in a city wall, or a sign of ancestral blessing among a small cult. The Director should use mutation as a force that creates tension, not simple labels.

Types of Arcane Mutation

The following categories help the Director describe mutation sources, visible signs, likely effects, and story consequences.

A single mutation may belong to more than one type. Redbloom is often Coral-Grown and Brine-Marked. A relic-touched vault guardian may be Relic-Bred and Abyss-Touched. A strange leviathan cult may carry Leviathan-Changed bloodlines and Tidewarped dreams.

Brine-Marked

Brine-Marked mutations come from magical floodwater, corpse-brine, old spellwater, cursed blood, or contaminated Wounds. They often appear after exposure to ruined battle sites, old flood chambers, failed rites, or waters that still carry the Deluge's residue.

Common signs include translucent skin, glowing veins, salt-crystal bones, gill scars, red or blue blood sheen, fever dreams, and painful reactions to certain currents.

Brine-Marked creatures may resist pressure, survive dirty water, track blood, or sense old flood magic. They may also suffer thirst-like cravings, brittle bones, salt pain, social rejection, or attraction from predators that smell the mark.

Use Brine-Marked mutation for stories of survival, infection, blood debt, old battlefields, and the cost of staying alive too long in bad water.

Coral-Grown

Coral-Grown mutation fuses living bodies with coral, reef intelligence, mineralized growth, or cultivated reef systems gone wrong. It appears in Redbloom zones, corrupted reef cities, damaged Reefwork sites, living gates, and old gardens that were never meant to keep growing.

Common signs include coral ridges, branching red or white growth, hard plates under the skin, stiff joints, slow wound closure, reeflike eyes, and skin that grows toward light or magic.

Coral-Grown creatures may gain armor, slow regeneration, reef-sense, and the ability to root themselves into structures. They may also become vulnerable to blight, unable to move freely, controlled by colony impulses, or driven to spread growth into other living tissue.

Use Coral-Grown mutation for Redbloom horror, living cities, beautiful corruption, infected Wounds, and places where the environment itself becomes predatory.

Abyss-Touched

Abyss-Touched mutation comes from deep pressure zones, blackwater magic, abyssal shrines, trench relics, and things that sleep beneath ordinary depth. It is most common near the Black Reaches and Hadal Wounds, but it can appear anywhere deepwater influence rises.

Common signs include luminous eyes, elongated limbs, pale or darkened flesh, pressure-sense, aversion to bright water, whispering dreams, stillness under stress, and voices that carry strangely in darkness.

Abyss-Touched creatures may see in blackwater, resist pressure, sense movement through stone or silt, or terrify prey. They may also suffer from brightwater pain, emotional distance, compulsive silence, or attention from abyssal powers.

Use Abyss-Touched mutation for deep secrets, blackwater dread, Ultharic influence, forbidden descents, and the feeling that the sea has depths that do not belong to the living.

Tidewarped

Tidewarped mutation changes with current, moon-pull, magical tide, stormwater, or route pressure. These creatures and regions may not remain the same from scene to scene. Their bodies may stretch, split, soften, harden, school, merge, or shift according to conditions.

Common signs include fluid outlines, changing color, seasonal anatomy, extra fins during current shifts, bodies that divide into smaller forms, or scars that move with the tide.

Tidewarped creatures may escape restraints, move with unnatural grace, split into swarms, or adapt quickly to a battlefield. They may also become unstable, lose memory, act differently during moon-tides, or suffer harm when trapped away from moving water.

Use Tidewarped mutation for strange travel hazards, current mysteries, unstable creatures, moon-tide omens, and beings that make ordinary maps unreliable.

Relic-Bred

Relic-Bred mutation comes from old-world magical engines, survival chambers, sealed breeding systems, preservation vaults, or devices that altered living bloodlines across generations. These mutations are often stable enough to create lineages, but their origins may be artificial, hidden, or morally troubling.

Common signs include symmetrical markings, metal or glasslike bone structures, precise body patterns, unusual pressure tolerance, inherited spell response, memory marks, and instinctive reactions to relic systems.

Relic-Bred people or creatures may interface with old systems, survive strange chambers, resist certain exposures, or carry inherited knowledge in dreams. They may also trigger relics by accident, suffer from old command responses, or be claimed by Arkborn, cults, or vault authorities as living property.

Use Relic-Bred mutation for Arkborn mysteries, bloodline secrets, sealed vaults, old experiments, and the question of whether survival was ever innocent.

Leviathan-Changed

Leviathan-Changed mutation comes from long proximity to ancient sea titans, worldwhales, mantle giants, god-corpses, world-serpents, or vast living routes. Some changes come from living on or near leviathans for generations. Others come from wounds, dreams, births, or rites performed near enormous beings.

Common signs include broad body growth, deep voices, mantle-like skin, unusual calm around large beasts, scar patterns resembling migration routes, pressure-heavy presence, and dreams of moving through the world at impossible scale.

Leviathan-Changed beings may command attention, calm beasts, survive long migrations, sense route shifts, or grow larger and stronger than their kin. They may also develop dangerous instincts, territorial rage, hunger for movement, fear of confinement, or a tendency to draw the notice of things far larger than themselves.

Use Leviathan-Changed mutation for migration mysteries, sacred beasts, giant-scale stories, route omens, and the cost of living too close to powers that do not think like people.

Mutation as Ecology

A mutated creature is not always an accident. Some have become part of the world.

Brine-Marked scavengers clean corpse-water. Coral-Grown guardians defend abandoned reefs. Abyss-Touched hunters keep worse things contained below. Tidewarped schools appear before current disasters. Relic-Bred beasts still obey old survival commands. Leviathan-Changed lineages may serve as living warning systems for migration routes.

This does not make mutation safe. It means the world has adapted around it.

The Director should decide whether a mutation is:

- **new and unstable**;
- **old and stable**;
- **useful but dangerous**;
- **sacred to a culture**;

- **forbidden by law**;
- **spreading**;
- **tied to a place**;
- **tied to a bloodline**;
- **a sign of deeper awakening**.

A stable mutation may be part of a culture, creature, or region. An unstable mutation should use Clocks.

Mutation and Culture

Different Bloodtides respond to mutation in different ways.

Coral Courts often classify, regulate, conceal, or weaponize mutation through legal and magical systems. A visible mark may become a political scandal.

Kelpway Clans judge mutation by how it affects living routes. A strange growth may be tolerated if it does not poison the path. A beautiful infection may be cut out without hesitation.

Shellhold Bastions treat mutation as a structural and medical danger first. If it spreads through gates, pumps, walls, or bodies, it must be contained.

Abyssal Kin may distinguish between ordinary deep adaptation and true corruption in ways upper Bloodtides do not understand. Their silence around some marks can frighten outsiders.

Arkborn study mutation through records, vault history, and inherited guilt. Some Arkborn know that not every stable bloodline began naturally.

Leviathan-Tide Peoples often interpret mutation through route, beast, and omen. A mark that appears after a leviathan dream may be feared, honored, or watched for years.

Mutation and Magic

Magic can soothe mutation, reveal it, worsen it, contain it, or wake it.

Wild Magic is best at calming living mutation, especially Greenwater Rites and Brine Rites. Formal Magic is best at identifying structure, sealing controlled effects, and containing relic or reef systems. Neither is perfectly safe.

A failed spell in a mutation zone may advance an Arcane Exposure Clock. A strong success may reveal the source, pause a Clock, or give the Protagonist a hard choice.

A mutation may also alter magic. A Brine-Marked caster may cast blood rites more easily but suffer stronger backlash. A Coral-Grown caster may empower Reefwork but attract Redbloom. An Abyss-Touched caster may perform deep rites in silence but suffer in bright water.

The Director should use such effects sparingly. They work best when mutation is central to the story.

Claimed by Mutation

Some people do not survive mutation as themselves.

The body remains. The memories may remain in fragments. The old voice may surface for a moment. But the person has been claimed by the change. What stands before the Protagonist is not

merely sick or wounded. It is a life overtaken by arcane ecology.

This should be tragic, not casual. A claimed person may be enemy, warning, victim, mystery, or the final stage of a Clock the Protagonist failed to stop.

Vel-Sathra

Common Names: claimed one, Redbloom host, coral saint, reef-wretch
Threat: Serious
Wounds: 4
Armor: 3
Attack: Coral Rake 60%, 1d8+1
Native Depth: Redbloom Reef, corrupted Blue Realms, Dim Roads

Description:
A Vel-Sathra is a person fully claimed by Coral-Grown mutation, most often through Redbloom infection. Their original Bloodtide form remains visible in outline, but the body has been overtaken by red branching coral, pale mineral plates, and soft pulsing growth. The skin splits around living ridges. The eyes glow faintly behind reef film. Gills, mouth, and joints breathe red spores into the water.

No two look exactly alike. A Shellborn Vel-Sathra may become a walking reef wall with huge coral knuckles. A Coral Court host may look almost beautiful, with red fans blooming from the shoulders and pearl-like growths along the throat. A Kelpway host may trail rootlike filaments that reach for nearby living plants. An Abyssal host may grow dark coral spines that pulse in blackwater.

Sometimes the old person speaks. The words may be memory, mimicry, plea, or bait. No one agrees.

A Vel-Sathra is drawn to living reef, open Wounds, and places where Redbloom can spread. It does not always attack at once. It may stand still like a statue, press its hands to walls, or drift with its head tilted as if listening to a voice inside the coral.

Traits:

- **Coral-Grown Armor**: Natural coral plating grants Armor 3. Blunt Weapons, Hard Materials tools, or careful Medicine may expose softer tissue.
- **Redbloom Spores**: When Wounded, the Vel-Sathra releases a red cloud. Nearby characters risk advancing a Redbloom Infection or Arcane Exposure Clock.
- **Old Voice**: Once per scene, the Vel-Sathra may speak in the voice of the person it used to be. Targets who knew the person may suffer −10 Disadvantage on their next action unless they pass Resolve or Insight.
- **Rooting Grasp**: If the Vel-Sathra hits with Coral Rake at 10+ DoS, it may anchor the target with coral filaments. The target must win Escape, Athletics, Blades, or Currentcraft to break free.
- **Reef Hunger**: Gains +10 Advantage while fighting in coral, Redbloom, reef ruins, or living structures.
- **Not Truly Dead**: Ordinary fear, pain, and intimidation do not affect it. It can be driven off, broken, contained, or destroyed, but not reasoned with unless the Director allows a brief memory fracture.

Tactics:
A Vel-Sathra tries to fight near walls, coral,

roots, or Wounded creatures. It rakes, anchors, and pulls targets toward infected growth. If outmatched, it roots itself into nearby reef and releases spores. It may use the old person's voice to delay attackers or lure someone closer.

Hooks:

- A missing Green-Tide Healer returns as a Vel-Sathra, still carrying a medicine roll.
- A Coral Court noble hides a claimed relative in a sealed reef chamber.
- A Shellhold gate is being slowly rooted open from inside by a Vel-Sathra.
- The Protagonist hears a lost Companion's voice from a Redbloom growth.
- A claimed one draws a map in coral before attacking.
- Wild Magic reveals that the person's memory still exists somewhere inside the reef.

Chapter Twenty: NPC Cultures of the Drowned Realms

The Bloodtides are the primary peoples of Undine, but they are not alone in the sea.

Beyond the known cities, routes, bastions, reefs, vaults, and migration waters are other cultures. Some are old enough to predate current Bloodtide histories. Some are the result of arcane mutation. Some are not cultures in the ordinary sense, but patterns of intelligence that use bodies, ruins, coral, or memory to act in the world.

These groups are intended for the Director. They may serve as adversaries, uneasy allies, mysteries, patrons, hidden powers, or campaign threats. They should not be treated as ordinary "monsters." Even the most dangerous have reasons, histories, needs, and internal divisions.

The Hadal Votaries

The Hadal Votaries dwell below the Black Reaches, near vents, trench walls, pressure caverns, and ancient depressions where ordinary maps become useless. They are not one people. They are a cluster of abyssal civilizations bound by pressure rites, ancestral markings, and devotion to things that live or sleep in the deepest parts of the world.

The Votaries communicate through touch-signs, pressure pulses, body posture, stone-contact vibration, carved trench marks, and slow ritual exchange. They do not use speech as upper Bloodtides understand it. Their messages can travel through stone, shell, and water when properly placed. Outsiders often mistake this for silence.

Some Votary settlements are peaceful, though their idea of peace can feel cold and severe. Others are terrifying, especially those that treat upper-water Bloodtides as brief, fragile, and spiritually unfinished. Most believe that truth becomes clearer as pressure increases. They associate bright water with haste, vanity, and unfinished thought.

Their histories claim that they survived the Deluge by going deeper, not higher. They say the upper world drowned because it feared descent. Whether this is theology, memory, or political myth depends on the settlement.

The Gloam-Eyed are sometimes treated with cautious respect by the Votaries, though not as equals. Blackfin Houses have trade and oath relations with certain trench towns. The Ultharic Spawn are feared, hated, or tolerated depending on the local Votary sect. Coral Courts are viewed as loud and temporary. Kelpway Clans are

respected for listening to living routes, but pitied for remaining near light. Shellholds are admired for endurance. Arkborn are distrusted because they open old things. Leviathan-Tide Peoples are regarded as touched by great motion but lacking deep stillness.

Region of Influence

Black Reaches, Hadal Wounds, trench walls, abyssal pressure caverns, and hidden stone settlements below known trade routes.

Notable Members

Irrusk of the Nine Pressures is an ancient Votary law-speaker who has not risen above the Black Reaches in decades. His judgments are carved into basalt walls.

Veyra-Marked Suth is a young emissary who believes upper-water Bloodtides must be warned about a coming pressure shift.

The Still Matron is a ruler, oracle, or preserved ancestor whose body rests inside a living pressure chamber.

Hadal Votary Emissary

Common Names: trench envoy, pressure-speaker, deep oath bearer
Threat: Standard
Wounds: 2
Armor: 1
Attack: Pressure Staff 50%, 1d6+1
Native Depth: Black Reaches, Hadal Wounds
Key Skills: Depth Lore 62%, Insight 55%, Abyssal Rites 52%, Intimidation 48%

Description:
A Votary Emissary has a long, narrow body adapted to extreme pressure. Their skin is dark blue, violet-black, gray-white, or translucent along the limbs. Their eyes are small or hidden beneath pressure folds. They wear stone beads, carved shell plates, and pressure-mark cords that identify ancestry and settlement.

They rarely speak aloud. Instead, they use touch-sign, pulse-stones, and carved marks. An interpreter may be needed unless the Protagonist knows abyssal customs.

Traits:

- **Pressure-Born**: Ignores ordinary penalties from Black Reaches pressure.
- **Stone-Sign Communication**: Can send simple messages through marked stone or shell surfaces.
- **Deep Stillness**: Gains +10 Advantage to resist fear, panic, and intimidation.
- **Brightwater Strain**: Suffers −10 Disadvantage in bright upper waters unless protected.
- **Ritual Authority**: May command respect from Gloam-Eyed, Blackfin, or certain abyssal communities.

Tactics:
A Votary Emissary avoids pointless violence. If forced, they use pressure staff strikes, defensive rites, and the environment. They prefer to end fights by making opponents realize they are not welcome.

Hooks:

- A Votary Emissary arrives in the Blue Realms to warn that a Hadal Wound has opened.
- The Emissary refuses to speak unless the Protagonist descends to a pressure shrine.

- A Shellhold arrests a Votary envoy for refusing gate law.
- The Emissary carries a carved warning that Arkborn records claim is impossible.

The Silt Dead

The Silt Dead are remnants of the drowned old world, preserved in pressure, mud, salt, and failed immortality rites. Some are corpses animated by old magic. Some are half-living survivors trapped in cycles of memory. Some are not undead in the simple sense, but people whose bodies stopped dying correctly.

They are found in sealed ruins, old battlefields, collapsed air vaults, silted streets, tomb districts, and chambers where the Deluge struck too quickly for death to finish its work. They are often confused, hostile, or bound to repeated action. A Silt Dead merchant may still weigh goods in a market that has been gone for millennia. A Silt Dead soldier may defend a road no one uses. A Silt Dead noble may demand news of an empire no Bloodtide remembers.

The Bloodtides react to them with fear, pity, or practical caution. Arkborn scholars want to question them. Shellholds destroy them if they threaten gates. Coral Courts sometimes try to claim them as legal witnesses. Kelpway Clans treat them as unquiet remnants that poison routes. Abyssal Kin are less surprised by them than most. Leviathan-Tide Peoples avoid places where the dead do not drift.

Region of Influence

Old-world ruins, silted cities, tomb vaults, drowned markets, collapsed air chambers, and Deluge-era battlefields.

Notable Members

The Mud King of Eshar rules a silted hall where dead courtiers repeat a feast.

Tala in the Doorway is a Silt Dead child who appears at the threshold of sealed vaults before disaster.

The Salt Procession is a line of dead pilgrims that crosses the same route once every thirteen moon-tides.

Silt Dead Remnant

Common Names: salt remnant, mud dead, drowned revenant
Threat: Standard
Wounds: 2
Armor: 1
Attack: Salt-Grip 50%, 1d6+1
Native Depth: Blue Realms, Dim Roads, ruins
Key Skills: Athletics 50%, Danger Sense 45%, Intimidation 48%, Relic Lore 40%

Description:
A Silt Dead Remnant looks like a drowned corpse preserved in mud, salt, and pressure. Its skin may be gray, white, brown, or blackened by old water. Silt leaks from its mouth and joints. Some still wear fragments of old-world clothing, armor, jewelry, or tools.

Many repeat a task. Guard. Search. Count. March. Pray. Wait.

Traits:

- **Unquiet Body**: Immune to ordinary poison, disease, and fatigue.
- **Salt-Grip**: On 10+ DoS, may hold a target until Escape or Athletics breaks free.
- **Memory Loop**: May repeat old actions unless disturbed.
- **Silt Veil**: Gains +10 Advantage to Stealth while motionless in silt or mud.
- **Old Remnant**: Scholar or Relic Lore may identify clothing, speech, or symbols from before the Deluge.

Tactics:
A Silt Dead Remnant approaches slowly until its loop is broken. Then it attacks with sudden strength. It may stop if shown a symbol, word, or object from its old life.

Hooks:

- A Silt Dead guard carries a key no living person knows how to use.
- An Arkborn wants one captured for questioning.
- A dead market begins trading again in the silt.
- A Remnant recognizes the Protagonist by a name that is not theirs.

The Glass-Eel Houses

The Glass-Eel Houses are aristocratic predator lineages descended from arcane mutation, deep breeding, and ancient palace ruins. They are not eels in the ordinary sense. They are long-bodied, intelligent, venomous beings with translucent flesh, jewel-like organs, and a culture obsessed with beauty, lineage, poison, and betrayal.

Their palaces are transparent ruins, old pleasure domes, glass corridors, and flooded estates. They cultivate venom gardens, pearl mirrors, captive prey schools, and delicate political games that can last for generations. Their bodies are beautiful in a predatory way. Their manners are precise. Their hospitality is never safe.

The Glass-Eel Houses view the Bloodtides as useful, crude, fascinating, or edible depending on rank and circumstance. Coral Courts understand their formal cruelty better than most and sometimes bargain with them. Arkborn seek their ruins but avoid their banquets. Kelpway Clans despise their waste and predation. Shellholds treat them as threats if they approach trade gates. Abyssal Kin respect their patience but distrust their vanity. Leviathan-Tide Peoples consider them trapped in pretty cages.

Region of Influence

Transparent palace ruins, old pleasure domes, glass estates, venom gardens, and isolated Blue Realm or Dim Road courts.

Notable Members

Lady Thress of the Clear Spine is a House matriarch whose body reveals a beating gold heart.

Veyl-Under-Glass is a young heir who wants to abandon predation and has no idea how.

The Venom Aunts are three ancient sisters who control marriage, murder, and antidotes in their estate.

Glass-Eel Noble

Common Names: glass lord, venom courtier, clear-spine
Threat: Serious
Wounds: 3
Armor: 1
Attack: Venom Bite 55%, 1d8 plus poison
Native Depth: Blue Realms, Dim Roads
Key Skills: Deception 62%, Insight 58%, Persuasion 55%, Sleight of Hand 50%

Description:
A Glass-Eel Noble has a long, elegant body, delicate limbs, translucent skin, and internal organs that shine like colored glass. Their eyes are large, dark, and heavily rimmed. Many wear jewelry inside thin skin folds or set along transparent crests.

They speak with polished courtesy. Their venom is both weapon and art.

Traits:

- **Venom Bite**: A Wounded target may suffer poison effects if untreated.
- **Transparent Beauty**: Gains +10 Advantage in social scenes where elegance, fascination, or intimidation applies.
- **Treachery Culture**: Gains +10 Advantage to Deception within formal negotiations or staged hospitality.
- **Glass Body**: Vulnerable to heavy blunt trauma; Blunt Weapons may gain narrative advantage if they strike cleanly.
- **Antidote Games**: Often carries or controls antidotes to their own venom.

Tactics:
A Glass-Eel Noble avoids fair fights. They use poison, servants, etiquette, terrain, and emotional manipulation. If cornered, they strike fast and flee through narrow glass passages.

Hooks:

- A Glass-Eel House invites the Protagonist to a banquet where every course is a test.
- A noble offers a rare antidote in exchange for betrayal.
- Transparent palace ruins contain an Arkborn relic.
- A young Glass-Eel heir seeks asylum among the Bloodtides.

The Vent-Smith Enclaves

The Vent-Smith Enclaves live around volcanic vents, heat shelves, mineral chimneys, and deep forge caverns. They are not one Bloodtide. They are a collection of heat-dwelling craft cultures, mixed outcasts, altered lineages, and hard-bodied workers who have built a life around fire under water.

They craft volcanic glass, black iron, sulfur-glass, pressure bronze, vent-metal, heat-tempered coral, and tools that cannot be made in cold water. Their settlements glow red and orange in the dim. Their workshops hiss, pulse, and crackle behind pressure shields. Their work is dangerous, but few can match it.

Vent-Smiths are respected almost everywhere and trusted almost nowhere. They sell to Shellholds, Arkborn, Coral Courts, Blackfin Houses, smugglers, and sometimes worse buyers. They claim neutrality because everyone needs tools. Their critics call this cowardice or greed.

The Shellholds rely on their materials. Arkborn trade relic fragments for specialized fittings. Coral Courts prize their glass and ornament. Kelpway Clans dislike the damage vent mining can cause but use their tools. Abyssal Kin trade pressure stones and deep minerals. Leviathan-Tide Peoples value their repair work on harness frames and route platforms.

Region of Influence

Vent fields, mineral chimneys, Shellhold lower trade routes, Dim Roads, and hot reef caverns.

Notable Members

Orram Black-Heat is a master smith whose vent-metal work is said to hold against Hadal pressure.

Mela of the Burning Hands leads a workers' revolt against an enclave council selling weapons to Ultharic agents.

The Nine-Fire Compact controls several linked forge caverns and decides who may buy pressure bronze.

Vent-Smith Factor

Common Names: forge factor, heat trader, vent-broker
Threat: Standard
Wounds: 2
Armor: 2
Attack: Heat Hammer 50%, 1d8
Native Depth: Dim Roads, vent fields
Key Skills: Crafting: Hard Materials 62%, Bargain 55%, Deepworks 52%, Intimidation 48%

Description:
A Vent-Smith Factor is a trader, foreman, or craft representative from an enclave. They often have heat-scarred skin, protective eye lenses, dense gloves, and vent-metal tools. Their gear is practical and expensive.

They speak bluntly because they assume everyone wants something from them. They are usually right.

Traits:

- **Heat-Hardened**: Resistant to ordinary heat, vent discomfort, and forge conditions.
- **Masterwork Eye**: Can judge weapons, armor, tools, and metalwork quickly.
- **Pressure Bronze Access**: May arrange rare equipment if properly paid or convinced.
- **Hard Bargainer**: Gains +10 Advantage in trade negotiations involving craft goods.
- **Forge Armor**: Protective gear grants Armor 2.

Tactics:
A Factor avoids combat if possible but fights with heavy tools, guards, and environmental hazards. In a forge, they know every hot vent and pressure shield.

Hooks:

- A Vent-Smith enclave refuses to sell repair parts until a stolen mold is recovered.
- Their newest pressure bronze cracks near Redbloom water.
- A Factor hires the Protagonist to sabotage a rival forge.
- Ultharic agents attempt to buy heat-tempered weapons in secret.

The Dry Restorationists

The Dry Restorationists are rare, scattered groups obsessed with reclaiming the surface, draining waters, restoring air empires, or resurrecting the old world that existed before the Deluge. Some are tragic dreamers. Some are scholars chasing impossible history. Some are fanatics willing to kill entire regions to raise land no living Bloodtide has ever known.

They gather around air vaults, surface ruins, dry chambers, Arkborn records, and relic systems that suggest the old world might be restored. They preserve forbidden maps, dry books, cracked statues, old royal names, and stories of sky.

Not all Restorationists are evil. A few want safe air chambers, better preservation, or knowledge of the past. The danger comes from those who believe the sea is a prison and the Bloodtides are failed heirs of the old surface. These radicals may attempt to drain reef basins, break pressure gates, poison growth, awaken weather engines, or seize Arkborn domes.

Arkborn are divided over them. Some consider them dangerous cousins. Coral Courts suppress them when politically useful. Kelpway Clans see them as enemies of living routes. Shellholds fear their sabotage. Abyssal Kin consider them almost insane. Leviathan-Tide Peoples reject their hatred of water.

Region of Influence

Arkborn domes, old surface ruins, dry chambers, air vaults, forbidden archives, relic weather rooms, and hidden political cells.

Notable Members

Serev Haln is an Arkborn historian who believes the surface can be restored without killing the sea.

The Dry Prince is a masked radical claiming descent from a pre-Deluge royal line.

Mother Ash-of-Sky leads a cult that burns dried herbs and old paper as offerings to the lost air.

Dry Restorationist Agent

Common Names: dry zealot, air-cultist, surface claimant
Threat: Standard
Wounds: 2
Armor: 1
Attack: Salvage Blade 50%, 1d8
Native Depth: Blue Realms, air vaults, surface ruins
Key Skills: Deception 58%, Scholar 55%, Relic Lore 52%, Sabotage via Deepworks 48%

Description:
A Dry Restorationist Agent may look like a scholar, trader, Domewright assistant, court guest, or harmless eccentric. Many carry old-world tokens, sealed dry papers, air-vault charms, or symbols of lost kingdoms. Their clothing often includes preserved cloth, dry-leather fragments, or imitation surface styles.

They are dangerous because they know how to pass as reasonable until the moment they act.

Traits:

- **Old World Obsession**: Gains +10 Advantage on Scholar or Relic Lore involving surface ruins, air vaults, or dry chambers.

- **Hidden Cell**: May call on local sympathizers, safe rooms, or caches.
- **Saboteur**: Can damage gates, pumps, moisture systems, or vault seals with preparation.
- **Fanatic Resolve**: Gains +10 Advantage to resist intimidation when acting for the cause.
- **Dry Gear**: Often carries tools useful in air chambers or semi-dry environments.

Tactics:
An Agent avoids open conflict. They sabotage, manipulate, recruit, and flee toward prepared exits. If cornered, they destroy evidence.

Hooks:

- A Restorationist cell tries to open a weather engine.
- An Arkborn dome is sabotaged from inside.
- A sympathetic historian asks for help stopping extremists in their own movement.
- The Protagonist discovers a dry map naming a place that should not exist.

The Moon-Drowned

The Moon-Drowned believe the moons caused the Deluge or at least opened the way for it. They teach that tides, mutations, dreams, birth cycles, leviathan routes, and certain magical failures are controlled by moon-pull. Their culture is part religion, part science, part omen tradition, and part wandering society.

They live in tide caves, open-water platforms, moonlit upper ruins, migration routes, and chambers where the surface glow can be seen through broken water. Some are harmless mystics. Others are precise astronomer-priests. A few are dangerous fatalists who believe certain births, mutations, or cities must be sacrificed when the moons demand correction.

The Moon-Drowned are not tied to one Bloodtide. They accept converts, foundlings, exiles, and children born under marked tides. Their bodies often show ritual scars, pale pigment, moon-shell ornaments, and tide calendars carved into bone or shell.

They respect Leviathan-Tide Oracles and sometimes argue with them. Kelpway Clans tolerate them when their omens match route experience. Coral Courts use them as astrologers while mocking them in private. Arkborn scholars debate their records. Shellholds distrust any group that tells workers a gate failed because the moon wished it. Abyssal Kin treat them cautiously, as moonlight means less in the deepest dark.

Region of Influence

Tide caves, Sunlit Skin ruins, open-water platforms, moon-viewing chambers, Leviathan routes, and mixed settlements with strong omen traditions.

Notable Members

Ammeth of the Third Pull is a Moon-Drowned astronomer whose predictions have saved three settlements and doomed one.

Pale Vira is a wandering midwife who marks children born during dangerous tides.

The Broken Calendar is a sect that believes one moon is dead and dreaming beneath the sea.

Moon-Drowned Tide Reader

Common Names: moon oracle, tide reader, pale calendar
Threat: Standard
Wounds: 2
Armor: 0
Attack: Crescent Knife 45%, 1d6
Native Depth: Sunlit Skin, Blue Realms, open-water routes
Key Skills: Moon-Tide Mysteries 58%, Insight 55%, Cartography 50%, Persuasion 48%

Description:
A Moon-Drowned Tide Reader wears pale shell ornaments, moon-salt marks, and tide calendars etched into bone or pearl. Their skin may be painted with white, silver, blue, or black crescents. Some shave or bind hairlike growths to show devotion to certain moon phases.

They speak in practical warnings as often as prophecy. The best are careful observers. The worst mistake symbolism for certainty.

Traits:

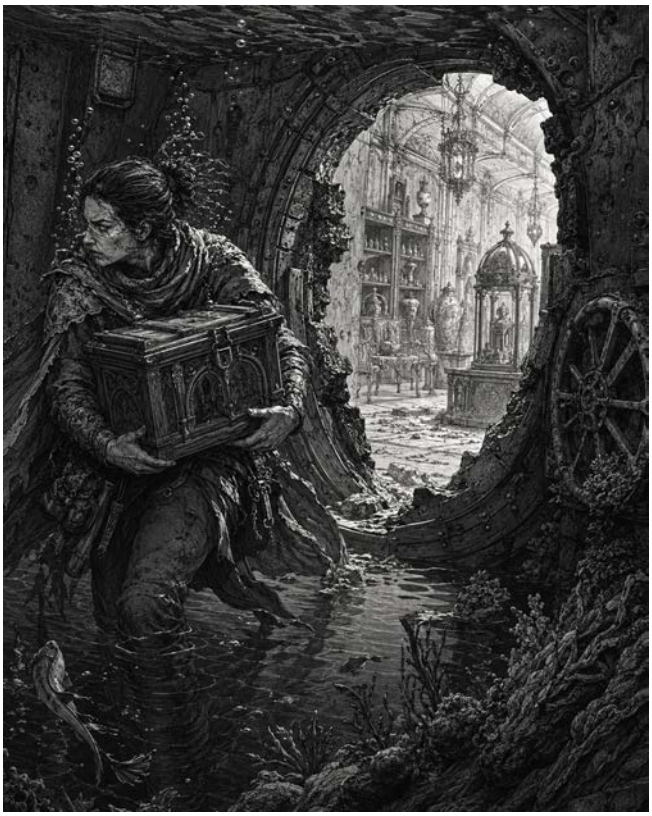
- **Moon-Tide Reading**: May Assist travel, omen, birth, dream, or tide-related Tests.
- **Marked Calendar**: Keeps accurate records of moon phases, route changes, and strange births.
- **Dream Listener**: Gains +10 Advantage when interpreting repeated dreams or shared omens.
- **Fatalist Streak**: May accept harsh outcomes if they believe the moon-sign demands it.
- **Ritual Knife**: Carries a crescent knife used for cutting cords, offerings, and self-defense.

Tactics:
A Tide Reader avoids combat, using allies, omens, and escape routes. If pressed, they use small blades, blinding moon-salt, or Wild Magic.

Hooks:

- A Tide Reader predicts a safe route that every map denies.
- The Moon-Drowned mark a newborn as dangerous.
- A sect claims the next tide requires a city gate to remain open.
- A moon calendar points toward a Deluge-era vault.

Chapter Twenty One: Relics, Vaults & Ancient Ruins



The Drowned Realms are built over a dead world.

Beneath coral, silt, root, shell, and pressure lie the remnants of kingdoms that never expected to drown. Their towers now lean under reef growth. Their roads run beneath whale routes. Their temples are full of fish. Their archives may still hold air behind seals older than any living Bloodtide city. Their machines hum in the dark, obeying orders given thousands of years ago.

Not every ruin is a dungeon. Some are tombs. Some are cities. Some are engines. Some are vaults. Some are wounds that architecture grew around. A ruin might contain nothing more dangerous than bad pressure and broken stone.

Another might wake an old-world defense, release spellwater into the sea, or show the Protagonist a memory of the Deluge itself.

Relics and vaults should feel wondrous, useful, and dangerous. They are not merely treasure sites. They are pieces of the old world that still have weight.

A good ruin in Undine should answer at least one question and raise several more.

What Ancient Ruins Are

Ancient ruins are the remains of the world before the Deluge. They may have belonged to surface empires, coastal kingdoms, sky-fortress realms, arcane city-states, sea-facing temple cultures, royal academies, magical engineers, or peoples whose names are now known only through broken inscriptions.

The Bloodtides disagree about these ruins.

Arkborn scholars see them as evidence, inheritance, and warning. Coral Courts treat them as dangerous sources of prestige. Shellhold Bastions care whether they threaten gates, pressure, or settlement stability. Kelpway Clans judge them by how they affect living routes. Abyssal Kin often regard deep ruins as places that should not be disturbed without permission from the dark. Leviathan-Tide Peoples read them as scars in migration water.

A ruin may contain:

- drowned streets;
- collapsed towers;
- sealed air chambers;

- royal archives;
- broken aqueducts;
- old-world machines;
- ritual halls;
- military stores;
- preserved dead;
- relic guardians;
- arcane contamination;
- mutated ecosystems;
- dry rooms;
- memory records;
- functioning systems;
- legal records from extinct states;
- strange art;
- useless but valuable cultural objects;
- evidence about the Deluge.

A ruin may also contain nothing the Protagonist expected.

That is often better.

What Relics Are

A relic is any surviving object, device, artifact, record, tool, weapon, fragment, engine, or working system from the old world or from the early post-Deluge age.

Relics are not always magical. A preserved child's toy may matter as much as a working gravity anchor if it proves a city existed. A sealed musical instrument may be useless underwater but priceless to a collector. A royal tax ledger may have no obvious power and still destroy a Coral Court claim.

Relics fall into broad types.

Practical Relics

These still do something useful. They may purify water, produce light, stabilize pressure, open doors, store maps, preserve air, hold tools, or power an old system.

Arcane Relics

These contain magic, channel magic, record magic, or respond to spellcasting. They may require Formal Magic, Wild Magic, Relic Lore, Arcane Lore, or special attunement.

Cultural Relics

These are valuable because of history, beauty, rarity, or proof. They include crowns, tablets, statues, art, ritual objects, old coins, royal seals, legal records, and preserved books.

Broken Relics

These no longer work as intended but may be repaired, studied, harvested, or misused. Broken relics are often more dangerous than intact ones.

Living Relics

Some relics are biological or semi-biological. They may be grown keys, memory organisms, living seals, coral-bound engines, preserved bloodlines, or relic-bred guardians.

False Relics

Some objects look ancient but are later copies, scams, decoys, political forgeries, or deliberately planted traps.

What Vaults Are

A vault is a sealed place built to preserve, protect, hide, imprison, or survive.

Some vaults were built before the Deluge. Others were built during the catastrophe. A few were built afterward by Arkborn, Shellholds, Coral Courts, cults, or desperate survivors who feared something worse than drowning.

A vault should have a purpose. The purpose may be obvious, hidden, or misunderstood.

Common vault types include:

Ark Vaults

Ark Vaults were built to preserve people, bloodlines, records, animals, seeds, spells, or civic memory. Some succeeded for a time. Some failed. Some are still sealed.

An Ark Vault may contain preserved bodies, old records, air chambers, food stores, memory lexicons, sealed nurseries, survival diagrams, or descendants who never left.

Air Vaults

Air Vaults preserve dry or semi-dry environments. They may be Arkborn-made, old-world royal chambers, emergency shelters, laboratories, or sealed libraries.

Air Vaults are valuable because dry space is rare. They can preserve paper, cloth, pigments, herbs, machines, paintings, furniture, and old dead things in ways water cannot.

They are also dangerous. A door opened too quickly may flood the chamber, shatter pressure, destroy records, or release preserved spores.

Containment Vaults

Containment Vaults were built to keep something inside. This may be a creature, disease, weapon, god-fragment, failed spell, mutating bloodline, dangerous memory, or political truth.

A containment vault is often marked as a treasure vault by those who cannot read the warnings.

Memory Vaults

Memory Vaults store recorded experience, legal testimony, royal histories, ritual sequences, art, poetry, or ancestral voices. They may use pearls, crystal obelisks, memory coral, silver mirrors, shell-script plates, or living record organisms.

These sites are perfect places to reveal truths about the Deluge.

Engine Vaults

Engine Vaults house large working systems. Weather engines, current shapers, pressure stabilizers, flying fortress anchors, mana aqueduct controls, city shields, or old-world power cores may be hidden inside.

An Engine Vault is rarely safe. If the system is still active, it may still be obeying an order that no longer makes sense.

Tomb Vaults

Tomb Vaults hold the dead, or those who were meant to become something other than dead. They may contain royal corpses, failed immortality rites, Silt Dead, preserved soldiers, ancestor machines, funerary art, and curses.

A Tomb Vault is not always evil. It may simply expect respect.

Ritual Vaults

Ritual Vaults were built around magic. They may be temples, spell laboratories, sacrifice chambers, moon observatories, binding halls, or places where the Deluge was studied before anyone understood it.

Ritual Vaults often contain arcane exposure risks.

Living Vaults

Living Vaults use coral, root, fungus, engineered tissue, or relic-bred organisms as seals and guardians. Some grow. Some heal. Some remember. Some hunger.

Redbloom often begins in places like this.

Broken Vaults

Broken Vaults are already breached. Their contents may be gone. Their danger may be leaking. The adventure may not be "open the vault," but "stop what came out."

False Vaults

False Vaults were built to distract, trap, or conceal the real sealed place. They may contain symbolic treasures, fake records, cursed decoys, or guardians meant to convince intruders they found the truth.

Air-Sealed Sections

Some ruins and vaults contain air-sealed sections. These chambers are rare and valuable.

They may appear in:

- Arkborn domes;
- air vaults;
- royal libraries;
- sealed laboratories;
- old-world museums;
- sky-fortress anchor chambers;
- alchemical drying rooms;
- ritual observatories;
- preserved nurseries;
- survival shelters.

Air-sealed sections allow the Director to change the feel of an adventure. Suddenly the Protagonist is not swimming. They may be crawling, walking, climbing, slipping on dry stone, hearing echoes, smelling dust, and feeling their body begin to dry.

Use the **Out of Water** rules from the Depth, Pressure, and Travel chapter when characters enter these spaces.

Air-sealed sections may contain:

- dried herbs;
- paper scrolls;
- preserved books;
- cloth banners;
- painted walls;
- dry bones;
- old furniture;
- sleeping machinery;
- airborne spores;
- insects or relic-bred air creatures;
- dry alchemical powder;
- fragile maps;
- preserved portraits;
- fire-based tools;
- old air that should not be breathed.

A dry room should feel alien. It is a pocket of another world inside the sea.

Exploration Skills

Ancient sites should reward many Skills.

Relic Lore identifies old-world purpose, warnings, symbols, and likely danger.

Deepworks understands functioning systems, pressure locks, pumps, gates, vents, anchors, and machines.

Arcane Lore recognizes magical residue, spell scars, wards, cursed growth, and Deluge-era contamination.

Scholar reads records, inscriptions, old terminology, law, poetry, and archive systems.

Cartography interprets maps, route diagrams, city plans, and depth distortions.

Investigation reconstructs events, follows clues, and notices what is out of place.

Currentcraft handles dangerous movement, flooded halls, sudden flows, and vertical ruins.

Depth Lore identifies pressure dangers, descent hazards, and native-depth risks.

Medicine treats relic injuries, pressure trauma, preserved disease, and exposure.

Formal Magic interfaces with structured magic, seals, relic sorcery, and old commands.

Wild Magic senses living corruption, growth, mutation, and ecological disturbance.

A good ruin should not have only one solution. It should allow the Protagonist to approach problems according to their strengths.

Common Ruin Hazards

Ancient sites are dangerous even before monsters appear.

Common hazards include:

- pressure cracks;
- unstable ceilings;
- silted stairwells;
- sealed doors;

- false floors;
- dry chambers;
- bad air;
- corpse-brine;
- Redbloom growth;
- relic radiation;
- spellwater leaks;
- guardian systems;
- broken levitation engines;
- magnetic surges;
- old defensive wards;
- memory traps;
- collapsing air pockets;
- hostile current;
- trapped predators;
- parasite nests;
- Silt Dead;
- false maps;
- time echoes;
- old commands.

Use Clocks freely in ruins. A **Pressure Failure Clock**, **Air Vault Instability Clock**, **Arcane Exposure Clock**, **Relic Awakening Clock**, or **Gate Collapse Clock** can make exploration feel alive without requiring constant combat.

Common Creatures in Ruins

Ruins attract things that hide, nest, remember, or feed on the dead.

Frequently encountered creatures include:

- **Abyr**, especially in glassy vaults and reflective ruins;
- **Brineth**, where corpse-brine and failed rites linger;
- **Calith**, near vent-fed ruins and heated conduits;
- **Kairn**, in grave sites and battlefields;
- **Morl**, in silted halls and buried streets;
- **Mnemor**, near memory coral, witness pearls, and old archives;
- **Naluk**, in reef-grown walls and collapsed plazas;
- **Nerith**, along ancient routes and old stone roads;
- **Nharu**, in deep abandoned passages;
- **Relicants**, wherever old commands still operate;
- **Rulka**, near leviathan-borne ruins or large beast remains;
- **Sableth**, in deep palace ruins and blackwater halls;
- **Ulvek**, near Ultharic sites or abyssal ritual chambers;
- **Vaska**, in wrecked chambers and tool-filled ruins;
- **Yssik**, in pipes, drains, and reef holes.

Other common inhabitants include scavengers, smugglers, Dry Restorationists, Arkborn expeditions, Crowned Reef emissaries, Vent-Smith salvage crews, Glass-Eel envoys, and desperate treasure hunters.

The Director should decide whether a ruin is currently wild, occupied, sealed, claimed, sacred, quarantined, or politically contested.

Architecture of the Drowned Old World

Old-world architecture should feel different from modern Bloodtide construction.

Modern Bloodtide settlements are built for water. Ancient ruins often were not. Their proportions may feel wrong. Doors may open into drowned air corridors. Windows may face a sky no one sees. Stairs climb between levels even when swimming is easier. Roads run in straight lines across land that is no longer land.

A ruin might include:

- dry stairs now used as eel dens;
- towers that point toward the surface;
- plazas buried in silt;
- palace balconies used by reef predators;
- aqueducts full of mana leakage;
- air shafts that became vertical swim tunnels;
- royal gardens replaced by coral;
- libraries sealed behind pressure doors;
- drainage channels used by smugglers;
- statues eroded into monstrous shapes;
- sky docks for flying fortresses;
- foundations anchored by gravity magic;
- observatories that still track moons.

Architecture can tell the Director what the ruin was before it became an adventure site.

Ancient Architectural Relics

The following relic-structures can appear in ruins, vaults, and exploration sites.

Chrono-Crystals

Chrono-Crystals are fist-sized magical crystals that absorb ambient temporal energy. They are usually found in observatories, royal archives, ritual chambers, clock towers, and disaster-recording stations.

A stable Chrono-Crystal appears clear, blue-white, or smoky violet. It feels cold even in warm water. Cracks inside the crystal may move slowly, as if time is breaking in layers.

When cracked open or properly activated, a Chrono-Crystal releases a ghostly replay of the past. The most famous type shows a thirty-minute echo of the moment the former city was swallowed by the ocean. The replay is silent unless the crystal is intact enough to preserve sound. Figures appear as pale light. Buildings fall again. People run again. Water enters again.

Using a Chrono-Crystal may require Relic Lore, Arcane Lore, Formal Magic, or Scholar. A damaged crystal may replay the wrong moment, loop a single death, or draw the viewer into emotional shock.

Possible uses:

- reveal how a city drowned;
- show who sealed a vault;
- identify a lost ruler;
- reveal the location of a hidden door;
- prove that a Deluge account is false;
- replay an old betrayal;
- trigger an Arcane Exposure Clock.

Lodestone Anchors

Lodestone Anchors are massive enchanted iron spikes once used to tether great flying fortresses, sky docks, or levitating citadels to the earth. Many now lie half-buried on the seafloor, still pulsing with magnetic and gravity magic.

A Lodestone Anchor may be the size of a pillar, tower, or city gate. Its surface is black, rust-red, or blue-gray. Old runes may glow when metal, relics, or living bodies draw near.

Some anchors still repel water in a small area. This can create strange pockets of stillness, low-current zones, or even partial air cavities where explorers can camp. Others disrupt compasses, pull weapons, twist armor, or bend nearby debris into dangerous rings.

Possible uses:

- create a base camp in dangerous water;
- stabilize a ruined chamber;
- repel water from a small site;
- anchor a vehicle or platform;
- reveal old flying fortress routes;
- distort Cartography and metal tools;
- awaken guardian systems;
- pull vent-metal weapons from careless hands.

A working Lodestone Anchor is valuable enough to start wars.

Weave-Stitched Aqueducts

Weave-Stitched Aqueducts are ancient metallic pipes and channels that once transported refined magical fluid across the surface world. Some ran beneath cities. Some crossed valleys. Some fed towers, engines, royal gardens, healing houses, or military wards.

Now they lie broken in trenches, ruins, and deep city remains. Their metal is often bright beneath corrosion. Arcane stitching runs along the seams. Some still leak liquid mana into the sea.

This mana is not safe. It may glow in blue, gold, red, or clear threads. It may cause hallucinations, frenzy, mutation, or magical overload in nearby creatures. Aquatic predators exposed to it may become aggressive. Plants may grow too quickly.

Spellcasters may hear voices through their own magic.

Possible uses:

- source of rare alchemical reagent;
- cause of local monster frenzy;
- route marker through old city systems;
- power source for ancient machines;
- danger feeding Redbloom or mutation;
- clue to an intact engine vault;
- cause of spellwater storms.

A leaking aqueduct is an excellent reason to use an **Arcane Exposure Clock**.

Memory Lexicons

Memory Lexicons are massive crystalline obelisks once housed in royal archives, universities, law halls, temple libraries, or civic memory chambers. They are related in function to memory coral, but older and more artificial.

A Lexicon may hold trapped histories, poems, legal codes, songs, maps, royal decrees, scientific formulae, or personal memories copied from old-world minds. Some are clear crystal. Others are black, green, rose, or blue. Many are cracked. A few are still guarded.

Unlocking a Memory Lexicon may require Scholar, Relic Lore, Formal Magic, Pearl Divination, or an attunement Test. A powerful magic user may force access, but doing so risks damaging the record or exposing the mind to too much memory at once.

Possible uses:

- reveal lost history;
- teach a spell;
- identify old technology;
- prove a lineage;
- reveal a vault location;
- preserve poetry or culture;
- contain a dangerous false memory;
- trap the user in an old viewpoint;
- awaken a Relicant guardian.

A Memory Lexicon should never be "just a book." It is an encounter.

Building a Ruin

When creating a ruin, answer the following questions.

1. What Was It?

Choose the ruin's original purpose.

- palace;
- university;
- city district;
- temple;
- observatory;
- military fort;
- aqueduct hub;
- market;
- shipyard;
- sky fortress anchor;
- archive;
- prison;

- laboratory;
- hospital;
- royal tomb;
- survival shelter;
- engine house;
- pleasure dome;
- garden;
- bridge;
- civic hall.

2. Why Did It Survive?

- sealed before the Deluge;
- protected by magic;
- buried in silt;
- held by pressure systems;
- grown over by coral;
- guarded by relics;
- carried by a leviathan route;
- frozen in deep water;
- hidden in an air pocket;
- preserved by failure;
- avoided by locals;
- too dangerous to loot.

3. What Is Still Active?

- pressure gates;
- memory records;
- air seals;
- guardians;
- lights;
- gravity anchors;
- mana pipes;
- weather controls;
- defense wards;
- fungal life;
- living coral systems;
- Silt Dead rituals;
- old announcements;
- dry chambers;
- birth chambers;
- containment fields.

4. Who Wants It?

- Arkborn scholars;
- Coral Court nobles;
- Shellhold engineers;
- Kelpway guides;
- Abyssal Votaries;
- Dry Restorationists;
- Vent-Smith crews;
- Glass-Eel Houses;
- Crowned Reefs;
- smugglers;
- Ultharic priests;
- treasure hunters;
- desperate refugees;
- a leviathan route clan.

5. What Should Not Be Disturbed?

This is the most important question.

Every memorable ruin has something that should not be touched without cost.

Vault and Ruin Conditions

Roll 1d20 or choose.

d20	Condition
1	Flooded but structurally stable.
2	Partially air-sealed, with fragile dry chambers.
3	Pressure unstable; create a Pressure Failure Clock.
4	Outer seals intact, inner seals broken.
5	Inner chambers intact, entrance destroyed.
6	Occupants preserved in unnatural condition.
7	Occupants missing, with signs of organized departure.
8	A system still operates on old commands.
9	Living growth has taken over the structure.
10	Relic light pulses on a fixed schedule.
11	Memory records remain intact but guarded.
12	Records were deliberately erased or altered.
13	A sealed door opens only from inside.
14	The ruin is colder than surrounding water.
15	The site rejects one Bloodtide or reacts to another.
16	Signs of recent entry are visible.
17	Arcane contamination spreads from a central source.
18	A guardian still patrols.
19	The ruin is not where records say it should be.
20	The vault was built to contain something beneath it.

Ancient Relic and Ruin Treasure Table

Roll **5d10** or choose an entry. These are discoveries, treasures, oddities, useful objects, and collectible remnants. Some are valuable. Some are useless except to the right buyer. Some are dangerous.

5d10	Discovery
5	A sealed child's toy made of painted wood, worthless to most merchants but priceless to collectors of surface culture.
6	A bundle of dry letters in a cracked air tube, written in an extinct dialect.
7	A tarnished royal spoon set, still bearing a crest no current archive recognizes.
8	A pearl-sized bead of hardened mana, useful as an alchemical reagent but unstable near spellcasting.
9	A rusted ceremonial sword, too fragile for combat but valuable as proof of a lost order.
10	A preserved herb packet from a dry chamber, still potent if handled carefully.
11	A cracked lens that shows invisible old-world ink when held near relic light.
12	A box of old coins from a surface empire, useless as money but valuable to Arkborn historians.
13	A fragment of silk banner that somehow remained dry.
14	A pressure-sealed vial of unknown perfume that causes vivid memories in anyone who smells it.
15	A silver map plate showing streets that now lie beneath Redbloom Reef.
16	A small gravity nail that pins loose objects in place when twisted.
17	A dry book of children's stories, damaged but legible.
18	A bronze hand mirror that reflects the viewer as they looked yesterday.

5d10	Discovery
19	A relic lamp that still glows when touched by moon-salt.
20	A noble signet ring that proves a modern court claim false.
21	A set of glass prayer beads that hum near a Memory Lexicon.
22	A sealed tin of powdered pigment, useful for restoring old murals or creating rare inks.
23	A small air-cured root bundle that grants +10 Advantage to one Herbalism preparation if preserved.
24	A cracked Chrono-Crystal showing only three repeating seconds of panic.
25	A carved bone key that opens no visible lock but warms near certain vault doors.
26	A dry musical instrument impossible to play underwater but valuable to Restorationists.
27	A tube of old engineering diagrams for a pressure gate that should not have existed before the Deluge.
28	A handful of blue-white salt that chills water and preserves tissue.
29	A black glass dagger, sharp but brittle, marked with a forgotten royal seal.
30	A living coral bead that slowly grows toward the nearest lie spoken aloud.
31	A palm-sized Memory Lexicon shard containing one poem and one warning.
32	A sealed vial of refined mana leaking into the stopper. Dangerous but valuable.
33	An old-world physician's kit with strange dry instruments and intact bone saws.
34	A pearl record of a legal trial held during the first hours of the Deluge.
35	A vent-metal clasp that locks itself around any oath token placed inside.
36	A miniature Lodestone Anchor that repels loose water in a hand-sized field.
37	A preserved painting of the city before it drowned. Someone has recently scratched out every face.
38	A scroll of Formal Magic formulae, damaged but partly usable for learning a spell.
39	A dry seed case containing extinct surface seeds. Some may still live.
40	A relic compass that points toward the nearest active old-world engine.
41	A polished stone mask that whispers in a dead language during pressure changes.
42	A sealed tube of air from before the Deluge. Mostly useless, deeply valuable, possibly contaminated.
43	A bracelet of Chrono-Crystal chips that shows brief echoes of whoever last wore it.
44	A royal archive token granting access to a vault no one has found.
45	A half-working translation lens for old-world inscriptions.
46	A pressure-stable lantern that burns with colorless flame inside air chambers.
47	A relic-bred shell egg in suspended animation. Something living moves inside.
48	A Memory Lexicon access shard keyed to a bloodline that may still exist.
49	A sealed command rod that can pause one Relicant for a single exchange if used correctly.
50	An intact Chrono-Crystal containing a thirty-minute replay of the Deluge swallowing the site.

Using the Treasure Table

Not every discovery should be immediately useful. Some are proof. Some are bait. Some are only valuable because someone powerful wants them.

A good treasure may create a new problem.

A noble signet might start a court dispute. A relic compass might point toward danger. A sealed egg

might hatch later. A harmless painting might show a person who looks exactly like the Protagonist. A useless spoon might bear the crest of a family thought to be invented.

The Director should decide:

- Who wants this?
- Who fears it?
- What does it prove?
- What does it awaken?
- What does it cost to keep?

Sample Reliquary Sites

The Drowned Hour Archive

A Memory Vault beneath a collapsed observatory. Its Chrono-Crystals replay the Deluge every moon-tide, but each replay is slightly different. Mnemor gather outside the doors.

The Anchor Field

A field of Lodestone Anchors where flying fortresses were once tethered. Water moves strangely around the anchors, creating quiet base-camp pockets. Metal tools drift if not secured.

The Weeping Aqueduct

A broken Weave-Stitched Aqueduct leaks hallucinogenic mana into a trench. Local creatures are frenzied. The leak powers an old engine vault farther down.

The Dry Nursery

An air-sealed Ark Vault holding preserved cradles, painted walls, and sealed seed banks. The nursery remains dry, but something inside has been singing without sound through the walls.

The Glass Parliament

A transparent palace complex claimed by Glass-Eel Houses. The old council chamber contains a Memory Lexicon that still records every formal lie spoken within it.

The Red Engine

A ruined arcane engine chamber overtaken by Redbloom. The engine still pulses once each day, and each pulse advances mutation in nearby growth.

Final Guidance

Ruins in Undine should feel like more than old stone.

They are the drowned remains of ambition, fear, beauty, arrogance, love, and failure. They hold tools that can save settlements. They hold records that can destroy dynasties. They hold machines that still believe the world above the waves exists.

Let the Protagonist find wonder.

Then ask what wonder costs.

APPENDIX A:
One-on-One RPG Rules Reference

This chapter presents the core rules of the **One-on-One RPG System** in a form that can be used across many different settings, genres, and modules. Whether a game takes place in a drowned magical world, a fae-haunted land, a far-future psychic empire, a mythic underworld, or a street-level supernatural mystery, the underlying engine remains the same.

The One-on-One RPG System is built for focused play between one **Director** and one primary **Protagonist**. The Protagonist is the central figure of the story. The Director presents the world, portrays its characters, frames danger, judges consequences, and keeps the fiction moving. Some modules may rename the Director to better fit their tone, but the role remains the same.

The system uses a unified d100 resolution method. Characters have Attributes, Skills, Destiny, possible Companions, setting-specific resources such as Essence, and whatever gear, money, social position, or special abilities the module provides. Most uncertainty is resolved by rolling equal to or under a modified value on percentile dice. The better the roll succeeds, or the worse it fails, the more strongly the result affects the story.

This chapter covers character generation, Essence or its setting equivalent, Skills, Destiny, Companions, archetypes, starting gear, task resolution, Clocks, combat, rest and recovery, and advancement. Setting modules may add new rules, rename terms, provide special abilities, or introduce genre-specific subsystems, but the rules here form the common foundation.

Character Generation

Character generation in the One-on-One RPG System creates a capable Protagonist suited to focused play. Because the game centers on one primary character, the Protagonist should be competent, flexible, and strongly connected to the setting's central conflicts.

Most modules use six core Attributes:

Might measures physical strength, force, and brute power.

Grace measures agility, precision, balance, and bodily coordination.

Endurance measures toughness, stamina, resistance, and physical durability.

Awareness measures perception, instinct, alertness, and immediate sensory judgment.

Intellect measures memory, reasoning, technical knowledge, education, and analysis.

Presence measures confidence, force of personality, charm, command, and social influence.

A module may rename these Attributes to better fit its genre, but their basic functions should remain clear and consistent.

Quick Attribute Allocation

For fast character creation, assign the following values among the six Attributes:

70, 65, 60, 55, 50, 45

Place the highest values in the areas most important to the Protagonist's concept. A warrior might favor Might, Endurance, and Awareness. A

scholar-mage might favor Intellect, Presence, and Awareness. A scout, thief, duelist, or pilot might place Grace near the top.

Point Allocation

For more customized character creation, distribute **345 points** among the six Attributes.

Unless the module states otherwise, no Attribute should begin below **40** or above **80** during character creation. This keeps beginning Protagonists grounded while still allowing clear strengths and weaknesses.

A value around 40 represents a notable weakness. A value around 50 is ordinary or serviceable. A value around 60 is strong. A value around 70 is excellent. A value around 80 represents exceptional natural ability.

Essence

Many One-on-One RPG System modules include a special resource used to power magic, supernatural gifts, psychic exertion, divine favor, inner fire, heroic force, spiritual authority, or other extraordinary abilities.

This chapter refers to that resource as **Essence**, but the name may change by setting. A fae module might call it Essence. A psychic science-fantasy module might call it Psi. A divine setting might call it Grace, Favor, or Devotion. A horror game might call it Will, Blood, or Sanity. The name should match the tone of the module.

Essence usually represents a limited pool that the Protagonist spends to activate special abilities. A spell, power, miracle, or supernatural technique may require the character to spend a listed amount of Essence before, during, or after the roll, depending on the module's rules.

The module defines:

- the name of the resource;
- how its maximum value is calculated;
- when it refreshes;
- what abilities spend it;
- whether failed use still costs Essence;
- whether enemies, Companions, or NPCs use the same resource.

Essence should always serve the setting. It is not required in every module. If a setting has no magic, psychic power, supernatural gift, or comparable exertion system, this section may be shortened or omitted.

Skills

Skills represent trained ability, practical experience, specialized knowledge, and repeated practice. While Attributes describe what a character is naturally like, Skills describe what the character can reliably do.

Each Skill is linked to one Attribute. The linked Attribute determines the Skill's starting base.

To calculate a Skill Base, divide the linked Attribute by 2 and round down.

For example, if a Skill is linked to Grace and the character has Grace 65, that Skill begins with a base of 32 before any Skill Points are added.

Skill Base is calculated as:

Linked Attribute ÷ 2, rounded down

After calculating Skill Bases, the player distributes **200 Skill Points** among the Protagonist's Skills. Each Skill Point increases one Skill by 1%.

Unless the module states otherwise, a starting Skill should not be raised above **70%** during character creation. This starting cap keeps early play uncertain while still allowing a Protagonist to be highly capable in key areas.

The Director may allow a higher starting Skill cap for very specific concepts, experienced heroes, legendary figures, or advanced campaign frameworks, but 70% is the standard default.

Skill Lists by Setting

Each module provides its own Skill list. Some Skills are common across many genres, such as Athletics, Stealth, Medicine, Persuasion, Survival, Craft, or Lore. Other Skills are specific to the module's world, such as Sorcery, Psi-Tech, Deepcraft, Oathcraft, Void Navigation, Fae Etiquette, or Bloodline Lore.

A setting's Skill list should express what matters in that world. The core procedure does not change: every Skill has a linked Attribute, a calculated base, and any additional points added during creation or advancement.

Destiny

Destiny represents the Protagonist's importance to the story. It is luck, resolve, dramatic focus, stubborn survival, divine notice, personal legend, or narrative gravity. Whatever form it takes, Destiny gives the player limited control over moments that matter.

Each module defines the Protagonist's starting Destiny. Some games may begin with a small pool to emphasize danger and restraint. Others may begin with a larger pool to support mythic, heroic, or cinematic play.

Destiny may be spent to modify rolls. Each point of Destiny may provide:

+10 to the Protagonist's roll, or
−10 to an opponent's roll

Destiny may be spent before or after a roll if the module allows it, but the default assumption is that Destiny is declared at the point of resolution, before the final result is judged. A module should state clearly when Destiny may be spent.

Multiple points of Destiny may be spent on the same exchange, if the Director allows and the module does not limit spending. A player may also use Destiny both offensively and defensively in the same exchange, such as gaining +10 to the Protagonist's attack while imposing −10 on the enemy's defense.

Destiny is most important when the story is at stake. It should not be spent casually on every minor roll. The best use of Destiny is to turn a desperate defense, secure a crucial success, resist a deadly enemy, complete a decisive action, or survive a moment that could change the course of the campaign.

Starting Destiny

Beginning players start with the normal One-on-One Destiny assumption:

- **Starting Destiny: 2–3**
- **Maximum Destiny: 2–3**

Directors will dictate the exact amount of Destiny a player begins play with, but 2–3 is typical in most modules.

This means a new protagonist begins play with a small but significant reserve of narrative force. They are not expected to use Destiny casually. Two points is enough to change a scene, rescue a bad moment, or force a roll that would otherwise likely go the wrong way. It is not enough to solve every problem by brute spending.

If the player spends it too early, they may later face the seal break, the witness panic, the collapsing stair, the black-market betrayal, or the combat reversal with empty hands. If they hoard it too carefully, they may lose the very scene it was meant to save. The tension between using and conserving Destiny is part of what makes it effective.

Recovering Destiny

Destiny is not meant to disappear forever. It is a renewable resource, but not a casual one.

As a default rule, Destiny should be recovered when the Protagonist reaches a point of meaningful reset, completion, or emotional re-centering. This may include:

- the end of a major mission
- successful completion of an Alert or district incident
- a substantial period of safe recovery
- a true rest in safety after danger
- a major story beat where the Creep has earned a moment of restoration

The Director may also award 1 Destiny back during play for especially appropriate moments, such as:

- accepting a cost tied to the character's role or duty
- protecting others at real personal risk
- acting in a way that strongly honors the archetype or emotional heart of the character
- making a meaningful sacrifice that keeps the story moving
- enduring the scene's pressure in a way that deepens the campaign rather than flattening it

This should be done sparingly. Destiny should be replenished enough to matter, but not so freely that players cease respecting it.

Companions

A Companion is an important supporting character, creature, construct, mount, ally, familiar, sworn guard, apprentice, machine intelligence, bonded beast, or other recurring figure who travels with or supports the Protagonist.

A Companion is not a second full Protagonist. Companions are lighter, simpler, and more focused than player characters. They exist to enrich the story, support the Protagonist, create emotional stakes, and broaden what the lone central character can attempt.

Most Companions use a compact rules profile. The exact format depends on the module, but Companions commonly have a small number of traits, a few useful actions, and a limited way to affect danger.

Companions commonly use three core functions: **Assist**, **Screen**, and **Anchor**.

Assist

A Companion may Assist when they help the Protagonist perform an action. This might mean distracting a guard, holding a lantern, translating a phrase, spotting a weak point, providing covering movement, lending tools, adding emotional support, or contributing specialized knowledge.

When a Companion Assists, the Protagonist usually gains an Advantage on the relevant roll. The strength of the Advantage depends on how useful the Companion's help is.

Minor help may grant **+10**.

Strong help may grant **+20**.

Exceptional help, perfect positioning, or highly relevant Companion expertise may grant **+30**.

A Companion must be able to help in the fiction. A wounded mount cannot Assist with delicate lockpicking. A silent familiar cannot argue a legal case unless the setting gives it a way to do so. The Director judges whether the help applies.

Screen

A Companion may Screen when they interpose themselves between the Protagonist and danger. This may involve blocking a strike, drawing fire, dragging the Protagonist from a collapsing passage, warning them of an ambush, taking a hit, or forcing an enemy to deal with the Companion first.

Screening is powerful because it changes who is exposed to harm. A Companion who Screens may suffer danger, damage, separation, exhaustion, fear, or another consequence in place of the Protagonist.

The module defines how much harm a Companion can endure. Important Companions should not be discarded casually, but Screening should carry real risk.

Anchor

A Companion may Anchor the Protagonist emotionally, spiritually, socially, or tactically. Anchoring applies when the Companion helps the Protagonist resist fear, despair, temptation, confusion, possession, isolation, panic, or loss of purpose.

An Anchor might remind the Protagonist of an oath, call them back from rage, keep them from surrendering, stabilize them during recovery, guide them through hostile terrain, or help them remain themselves under supernatural pressure.

When a Companion Anchors, the Protagonist may gain Advantage on an appropriate roll, resist a condition, hold position, or avoid a worse narrative consequence. The exact benefit depends on the situation and module.

Starting Gear and Money

Starting gear, money, equipment, property, contacts, mounts, weapons, armor, tools, vehicles, artifacts, supplies, and social assets are determined by the setting module.

Some modules provide starting gear by archetype. Others provide a standard package, a wealth roll, a shopping allowance, or a short menu of choices. A survival game might begin with almost nothing. A high fantasy knightly game might begin with armor, weapons, retainers, and a mount. A spacefaring game might begin with weapons, tools, debts, licenses, and access to a vessel.

The module should define:

- starting money or equivalent currency;
- basic clothing and personal items;
- starting weapons, armor, tools, or trade equipment;
- any free setting-specific items;
- whether archetypes provide gear;
- whether the Protagonist begins with property, vehicles, mounts, followers, titles, or obligations.

Gear should support the Protagonist's place in the world. It should not only be a list of equipment. A noble's signet ring, a broken relic, a family blade, a forbidden book, a worn diving harness, or a half-paid ship license can all matter more than their price.

Archetypes

Some modules use **Archetypes** during character creation. An Archetype is a setting-specific character framework that helps the player quickly understand who the Protagonist is, what role they fill, and how they connect to the world.

Archetypes may represent professions, callings, castes, lineages, former lives, social stations, supernatural inheritances, factions, military roles, cultural paths, or mythic identities.

An Archetype may provide:

- recommended Attribute priorities;
- recommended Skills;
- special traits;
- starting gear;
- social position;
- contacts or enemies;
- Essence-related abilities;
- Companion options;
- obligations, taboos, duties, or story hooks.

Archetypes are used only when the module includes them. Some modules may instead use open character creation, backgrounds, lifepaths, professions, or freeform Skill selection.

An Archetype should never replace the player's character concept. It is a useful structure, not a cage. The player and Director may adjust details to fit the Protagonist, as long as the setting remains coherent and the rules remain balanced.

Task Resolution

The One-on-One RPG System uses a d100 core. When the Protagonist attempts something uncertain and meaningful, roll percentile dice and compare the result to the relevant Attribute or Skill.

A roll succeeds if the result is equal to or lower than the final modified value.

A roll fails if the result is higher than the final modified value.

Do not roll for every action. If there is no pressure, no uncertainty, and no interesting consequence, the action simply happens. Rolls are for moments where success, failure, cost, timing, danger, or degree matters.

The d100 Core Principle

To resolve a task:

1. The Director determines the relevant Attribute or Skill.
2. The Director applies Advantage, Disadvantage, situational modifiers, and any Destiny.
3. The final number becomes the modified value.
4. The player rolls d100.
5. If the result is equal to or lower than the modified value, the action succeeds.
6. If the result is higher than the modified value, the action fails.
7. Degree of Success or Failure (DoS/DoF) determines how strongly the result affects the fiction.

The modified value is the number the roll must meet or beat by rolling equal to or under it.

Attribute Rolls

Attribute rolls are used when the action depends mostly on natural capacity rather than training.

Use Might to force open a jammed gate, hold a collapsing beam, or overpower someone in raw strength.

Use Grace to keep balance, slip through a closing gap, or react with bodily precision.

Use Endurance to resist poison, survive exposure, or keep moving through exhaustion.

Use Awareness to notice danger, sense an ambush, or react to a sudden change.

Use Intellect to reason through a puzzle, recall general knowledge, or make a deduction.

Use Presence to command attention, resist social pressure, or project authority.

Attribute rolls should be used when no Skill clearly applies, when the action is instinctive, or when the module specifically calls for an Attribute Test.

An attribute test begins at **half** of its value before any modifiers are applied.

Skill Rolls

Skill rolls are used when training, practice, or specialized knowledge matters. Most important actions should use Skills rather than raw Attributes.

A Skill roll uses the character's current Skill value, modified by circumstances.

For example, if the Protagonist has Stealth 62 and gains +10 Advantage from darkness, the modified Skill Value is 72. The player succeeds on a roll of 72 or lower.

Skills are the primary engine of action because they show what the character has learned to do.

Contested Rolls

A Contested Roll occurs when two characters directly oppose one another. Examples include attack against defense, stealth against perception, deception against insight, grappling against escape, persuasion against refusal, or magic against resistance.

Both sides roll against their relevant Attribute or Skill after modifiers.

If one side succeeds and the other fails, the successful side wins.

If both sides succeed, compare Degree of Success. The side with the stronger success wins.

If both sides fail, compare Degree of Failure. The side that failed by less may earn a Lesser Win if the situation allows.

If the result is tied, the Director may preserve the current situation, call for a new approach, grant a partial result, or allow the side with the better fictional position to prevail.

Modified Skill Value

The modified Skill Value is the final target number after all adjustments.

Start with the relevant Skill.

Add Advantage.

Subtract Disadvantage.

Apply Destiny.

Apply any other module-specific modifiers. These will typically be listed with a skill's description.

The result is the number the player must roll equal to or under.

A character with Blades 64, +10 from positioning, −20 from darkness, and +10 from Destiny has a final modified Skill Value of 64.

The calculation is:

64 + 10 − 20 + 10 = 64

The player succeeds on 64 or lower.

Degree of Success and Degree of Failure

The One-on-One RPG System cares not only whether a roll succeeds, but how well it succeeds or how badly it fails.

Degree of Success, abbreviated **DoS**, measures how far a successful roll falls under the modified value.

If the roll succeeds, calculate:

Degree of Success = **Modified Skill Value − Roll**

The result is the Degree of Success.

The higher the DoS, the cleaner, stronger, faster, sharper, or more controlled the result usually is.

A higher DoS may mean:

- stronger control in a contest
- quicker completion
- better positioning
- cleaner execution
- less noise
- fewer complications
- more effective combat result where margin matters
- stronger progress on a Clock or scene task

Degree of Failure, abbreviated **DoF**, measures how far a failed roll exceeds the modified value.

A low successful roll is usually better than a barely successful roll. A roll far above the target usually fails more severely than a near miss.

If the roll fails, calculate:

Degree of Failure = **Roll − Modified Skill Value**

The result is the Degree of Failure.

The higher the DoF, the worse the miss tends to be.

A higher DoF may mean:

- more noise
- more exposure
- worse timing
- harsher complication
- lost footing
- damaged tools

- increased suspicion
- greater scene cost
- faster escalation on a danger Clock

The Director may use DoS and DoF to judge speed, quality, damage, position, information gained, resources saved, complications avoided, or consequences suffered.

A simple success does what was intended.

A strong success may do it faster, cleaner, more quietly, with extra effect, or with better positioning.

A narrow failure may still provide information, progress, or a Lesser Win.

A severe failure may introduce danger, cost, exposure, damage, lost time, or a new complication.

Critical Success and Critical Failure

A module may use critical results to mark rare moments of exceptional fortune or disaster.

Unless the module states otherwise, a natural **01** is a Critical Success and a natural **00** is a Critical Failure.

A Critical Success should provide more than ordinary success. It may increase effect, avoid cost, create an opportunity, reveal extra information, improve position, or turn the situation sharply in the Protagonist's favor.

Outside combat, a Critical Success may mean:

- cleaner execution than expected
- extra information
- less time spent
- reduced risk
- an additional advantage gained
- stronger narrative control
- an added benefit appropriate to the action

A Critical Failure should create a meaningful complication. It does not need to be absurd or punitive, but it should matter. A weapon might be lost, an enemy might gain position, a spell might twist, a negotiation might sour, or a hidden danger might become immediate.

Outside combat, a Critical Failure may mean:

- loss of time
- making noise
- exposing intent
- breaking something
- worsening the scene
- suffering a new complication
- creating Disadvantage on what follows
- advancing a Clock more sharply than usual

Again, keep it grounded. A Critical Failure should matter, but it does not need to become slapstick unless the table's tone clearly wants that.

Criticals should serve the fiction. They should heighten important moments, not derail the game with random nonsense.

Advantage and Disadvantage

Advantage and Disadvantage represent circumstances that make an action easier or harder.

Advantage adds to the roll's target number.

Disadvantage subtracts from the roll's target number.

The standard values are:

Minor Advantage or Disadvantage: 10

Major Advantage or Disadvantage: 20

Overwhelming Advantage or Disadvantage: 30

Advantage and Disadvantage may come from tools, positioning, help, weather, injuries, cover, visibility, preparation, social leverage, terrain, surprise, magic, fear, fatigue, or any other meaningful factor.

Advantage and Disadvantage can stack when multiple factors apply. However, the Director should avoid excessive stacking that turns every roll into arithmetic. In most situations, total Advantage or Disadvantage should remain within the familiar +/-10, +/-20, or +/-30 range unless the circumstances are extreme or the module specifically allows more.

When both Advantage and Disadvantage apply, combine them before the roll.

For example, a Protagonist gains +20 for careful preparation but suffers −10 from poor visibility. The final modifier is +10.

Advantages and Disadvantages can stack, but the Creepmaster should stay disciplined. It is usually better to judge the overall weight of the scene than to count every tiny detail. In most cases, total situational adjustment should stay around **±30**.

Applied Destiny

Destiny modifies the roll after the Director establishes the normal circumstances.

A player may spend Destiny to add +10 per point to the Protagonist's roll value. This makes success more likely.

A player may also spend Destiny to impose −10 per point on an opponent's roll value. This makes the opponent less likely to succeed.

Destiny may be especially important in Contested Rolls, where a small change can alter who wins the exchange or how much Edge one side gains.

The Director may also grant, refresh, or limit Destiny according to the module's rules.

Lesser Wins

A Lesser Win occurs when a character does not fully succeed but still gains something useful, avoids the worst outcome, or fails in a way that moves the scene forward.

Lesser Wins most often appear when both sides fail a Contested Roll. In that case, the side that fails by less (lesser Degree of Failure) may gain a limited advantage.

A Lesser Win might mean:

- the Protagonist does not open the locked door, but finds another clue;
- the enemy is not defeated, but is forced back;
- the lie is not believed, but the target hesitates;
- the leap fails, but the Protagonist catches the ledge;
- the spell does not work fully, but produces a weaker effect;
- the attack does not wound, but creates pressure or position;
- the negotiation fails, but the other party reveals what they really want.

A Lesser Win should not erase failure. It should soften, redirect, or complicate it. The scene changes, but not as cleanly as the character hoped.

Clocks

Clocks are used to track progress, danger, pressure, investigation, travel, rituals, social influence, enemy plans, environmental collapse, pursuit, infection, corruption, repairs, or any other situation that unfolds over time.

A Clock represents one of five broad things:

1. Escalation
Something is getting worse over time. A breach is widening. A mob is turning. A predator is closing. A ritual is nearing completion.

2. Progress
The Protagonist is gradually accomplishing something that cannot or should not be resolved in one roll. A damaged portal is being stabilized. A barricade is being built. A frightened child is being calmed.

3. Capacity
Something has limited endurance before it breaks, flees, collapses, panics, or gives out. A barricade can only hold for so long. An escort group can only remain calm for so long. A wounded NPC can only survive so long without treatment.

4. Discovery
Information is being uncovered, assembled, or made legible over the course of action. A hidden route is being mapped. A dream pattern is being interpreted. A forged report is being exposed.

5. Competition
Two or more forces are advancing toward opposite outcomes. The Vigil is stabilizing the passage while something on the other side is trying to pry it open. The Protagonist is persuading a witness while fear is making the witness shut down. The district is being evacuated while panic is trying to outrun the instructions.

All of these are valid uses. The only real question is whether a scene becomes better, clearer, or tenser when tracked in this way.

If the answer is yes, use a Clock.

Clock Sizes

A Clock uses a die size to show its length and difficulty. Common Clock sizes are:

d4 for short or simple problems.

d6 for standard problems.

d8 for complex problems.

d10 for major or dangerous problems.

The Director creates a Clock when a task cannot be resolved by a single roll or when the pressure of accumulated progress matters.

Each successful action may advance the Clock. Strong successes may advance it further. Failures may stall progress, introduce complications, or advance an opposing Clock.

A Clock fills when enough progress has been made. Once filled, the result occurs. This may mean the Protagonist completes a ritual, repairs a damaged vehicle, escapes a pursuer, wins over a faction, deciphers a map, treats a disease, exposes a conspiracy, or reaches a destination.

Clocks can also represent threats. A rising flood, an enemy patrol, a spreading curse, a collapsing tunnel, or a political scandal may all be tracked

with Clocks. When a danger Clock fills, the consequence arrives.

Clocks are especially useful in One-on-One play because they give the lone Protagonist room to act across several moments without reducing everything to a single pass-or-fail roll.

Practical table method:
Use a single die in the open to represent a Clock (**d4, d6, d8, d10**). Start at "1" and advance the face as the Clock ticks. Let the player(s) watch the numbers change and decide where they want to bleed, burn Destiny, or bargain to push those numbers back down.

Combat

Combat uses the same d100 engine as the rest of the game. Attacks, defenses, maneuvers, and special actions are resolved through Skill rolls, Attribute rolls, Contested Rolls, modifiers, Destiny, DoS, DoF, Edge, criticals, and consequences.

Combat should be dangerous, clear, and consequential. It does not need to be slow. Every exchange should change the situation.

Combat Range

Each module defines the range categories most useful to its setting, but most combats can be handled with broad fictional ranges.

Close range covers grappling, knives, claws, fists, short weapons, and body-to-body struggle.

Melee range covers swords, spears, axes, shields, natural weapons, and other hand-to-hand fighting.

Near range covers thrown weapons, short-range firearms, bows in close terrain, short spell ranges, and quick movement across a room or clearing.

Far range covers bows, rifles, long spells, battlefield distance, open terrain, or targets requiring careful aim.

Extreme range covers sniping, artillery, vehicle weapons, siege engines, long-distance magic, or other specialized attacks.

Range should affect what actions are possible and whether Advantage or Disadvantage applies. A knife is poor at Far range. A long rifle is awkward in a grapple. A spear may control approach. A bow may suffer in cramped tunnels. A spell may require line of sight, a gesture, a spoken phrase, or a stable stance.

Attack and Defense

Most attacks are resolved as Contested Rolls.

The attacker rolls the relevant attack Skill.

The defender rolls the relevant defense Skill, defensive Attribute, or other appropriate value.

If the attacker succeeds and the defender fails, the attack lands.

If both succeed, compare Degree of Success.

If both fail, the side that fails by less may gain a Lesser Win, such as better position, forced movement, lost footing, damaged gear, or pressure without injury.

The Director determines what defensive option applies. A character might dodge, parry, block, brace, dive for cover, counterspell, resist, withdraw, or endure, depending on the attack and the setting.

Advantage, Disadvantage, and Destiny in Combat

Combat uses the same modifier structure as all other rolls.

Advantage may come from flanking, surprise, height, cover, superior reach, aiming, good footing, enemy distraction, prepared stance, better equipment, or Companion Assist.

Disadvantage may come from darkness, injury, unstable ground, being outnumbered, poor range, bad footing, fear, exhaustion, awkward weapons, restricted movement, or enemy pressure.

Destiny may be spent in combat to improve the Protagonist's attack or defense, or to hinder an enemy's roll. Destiny can turn a deadly exchange, but it should remain limited enough that danger still matters.

Degree of Success and Failure in Combat

DoS and DoF determine the strength of combat outcomes.

A narrow success may barely land, create only minor pressure, or inflict a lesser result.

A strong success may strike cleanly, bypass defense, improve position, increase harm, or gain Edge.

A severe failure may expose the attacker, break formation, lose footing, create an opening, damage gear, or allow the enemy to seize the initiative.

Combat should not be reduced to hit or miss. A roll changes distance, leverage, morale, cover, weapon position, footing, visibility, and control of the scene.

Criticals in Combat

Critical Success in combat should produce a decisive benefit. It may increase harm, ignore a lesser obstacle, create strong Edge, break an enemy's position, protect an ally, or allow immediate control of the scene.

Critical Failure in combat should create a serious complication. The character may lose footing, expose themselves, damage a weapon, strike the wrong target, overextend, fall into danger, or give the enemy a strong opening.

A Critical Failure should not automatically kill a Protagonist unless the module is intentionally brutal and the fictional situation supports it. It should make the battle more dangerous and immediate.

Combat honors the game's standard critical ranges.

- **01–05** = Critical Success
- **95–100** = Critical Failure

A Critical Success on an attack becomes a **Critical Hit**.

A Critical Hit adds:

one additional die of the weapon's listed damage

So if the attack normally inflicts **1d6**, a Critical Hit inflicts **2d6** before Edge and AR are applied.

Critical Miss

A Critical Failure on an attack becomes a **Critical Miss**.

A Critical Miss may cause:

- overextension
- loss of footing

- exposed recovery
- dropped weapon
- bad position
- sudden enemy opening
- embarrassing noise at the worst time

Edge

Edge represents the advantage gained when one side performs better than the other in a combat exchange. It is based on the difference between the attacker's and defender's results, especially when both sides roll and one side clearly outperforms the other.

Edge may increase harm, improve position, create an opening, bypass protection, impose a condition, disarm an enemy, force movement, or support a follow-up action.

The module defines exactly how Edge interacts with weapons, armor, powers, or special combat rules. In general, greater Edge means a cleaner, stronger, or more decisive result.

Edge is not only about damage. A duelist may gain Edge by forcing an enemy off balance. A hunter may gain Edge by pinning prey in bad terrain. A psychic may gain Edge by cracking an enemy's concentration. A shieldbearer may gain Edge by controlling the enemy's line of attack.

Calculating Edge

If attacker wins with success vs failure

Edge = **attacker DoS + defender DoF**

This is the most common case.

If both succeed and attacker wins

Edge = **attacker DoS − defender DoS**

Both sides did something right, but the attacker still came out ahead. Edge measures by how much.

If attacker wins by mutual failure (Lesser Win)

Default assumption: this is a **positional Lesser Win**, not a damage result.

If the Director allows damage on a mutual-failure attacker win, treat the attack as having:

Edge Damage Bonus: +0

That kind of ugly mutual failure may hurt, but it should not gain a significant Edge bonus unless the fiction is extraordinarily persuasive.

Edge Damage Bonus Table

Once Edge is calculated, apply the following bonus to the rolled damage:

Edge	Edge Damage Bonus
0–9	+0
10–19	+2
20–29	+4
30+	+6

This bonus is added to rolled damage before AR is applied.

What Edge Means in the Fiction

A hit with **Edge 3** may be:

- clipped flesh
- shield-rattling bruising
- a fast glancing cut
- a hit that landed but did not own the whole moment

A hit with **Edge 16** may be:

- a clean strike into a bad opening
- a hit delivered while the foe was off-balance
- a nasty shove-cut combination
- a well-earned blow after tactical control

A hit with **Edge 31** may be:

- a devastatingly dominant exchange
- a strike delivered when the target had no good answer
- the sort of hit that changes the emotional weather of the scene immediately

Use Edge to keep damage feeling tied to how the exchange actually unfolded.

Damage, AR, and Harm

When a real hit lands, roll damage.

Weapons, natural attacks, spells, and harmful effects list their damage dice. Roll the appropriate damage, add any Edge bonus, then apply AR.

Damage Sequence

1. Roll the attack's damage dice
2. Add Critical Hit extra die if applicable
3. Add Edge Damage Bonus
4. Apply AR
5. Convert the remaining Damage Score into a Wound Tier

Armor Rating (AR)

AR is a direct reduction to incoming damage.

Subtract the defender's AR from the total damage after Edge has been added.

AR matters. It can turn dangerous hits into merely ugly ones. It can keep a player standing long enough to matter one exchange longer than expected. It can also fail to save anyone from the consequences of bad positioning, good enemy timing, or deeply impolite monster strength.

If AR reduces damage to 0, the strike may still matter fictionally:

- bruising
- shock
- shield rattle
- loss of breath
- noise
- footing loss
- gear stress
- a Clock tick
- a witness panic spike

Protection is not invulnerability.

Wound Tiers

After AR is applied, compare the remaining Damage Score to the following wound tiers:

- **1–6**: Light Wound
- **7–12**: Medium Wound
- **13–18**: Severe Wound
- **19+**: Critical Wound

This keeps harm readable, fast, and serious.

Healthy

No wound penalties apply.

The protagonist may still be stressed, rattled, bruised, or exhausted from the scene, but nothing has yet risen to wound-tier consequence.

Light Wound

The player suffers **−10** to relevant physical actions.

A Light Wound is painful, irritating, and real, but not yet crippling.

Examples:

- shallow cut
- bruised ribs
- bitten forearm
- twisted ankle
- jolted shield arm
- fast glancing burn

Medium Wound

The player suffers **−20** to relevant actions.

A Medium Wound changes behavior. The protagonist is still in the scene, but the fight has become expensive and future decisions should begin acknowledging survival.

Examples:

- deep cut
- cracked limb
- strong puncture
- heavy body blow
- significant burn
- ugly fall impact

Severe Wound

The player suffers **−30** to relevant actions.

At this point, combat becomes a matter of extraction, desperation, or one final hard act before the body ceases to be cooperative.

Examples:

- major bleeding
- collapsed leg
- badly ruined shoulder
- heavy crushing trauma
- dangerous magical injury
- near-incapacitating wound

Critical Wound

The player is **Down**.

This means incapacitated, broken, unconscious, bleeding out, pinned, or otherwise no longer meaningfully controlling the fight.

The exact fiction depends on the scene:

- sprawled unconscious
- trapped under debris
- half-dragged by the creature
- collapsed against a wall
- hanging from a broken stair edge
- conscious but no longer combat-capable

Critical Wounds are not mild inconveniences. This is the line where combat becomes aftermath.

Wound Stacking

Repeated harm matters.

Use the following approach:

Higher New Wound

If a new wound tier is higher than the current wound tier, replace the current tier with the new one.

Equal New Wound

If the new wound tier equals the current wound tier, escalate the player one tier upward.

Example:

- currently Medium
- take another Medium
- now Severe

Lower New Wound

If the new wound tier is lower than the current wound tier, the lesser wound still contributes to overall deterioration. Track it in the fiction, and if repeated lesser harm keeps accumulating under a worse active wound, the Director should escalate when it becomes clear the player is being steadily overwhelmed.

The principle is simple: once hurt, continued hurt remains dangerous.

Control Instead of Damage

Not every successful combat action is about injuring the enemy.

Many of the best combat outcomes in One-on-One are positional and controlling.

Common control intents include:

- disarm
- trip
- shove
- pin
- drive back
- block the route
- cover a retreat
- protect someone
- break contact
- spoil a ritual

Success with Control

The effect happens as intended.

Lesser Win with Control

The effect happens, but the scene takes a bite out of the player in return.

Failure with Control

The enemy holds, counters, escapes, or imposes control instead.

Rest and Recovery

Rest and recovery rules vary by setting, but the core idea is simple: harm should matter, and recovery should require safety, time, care, or appropriate resources.

A brief rest may allow a character to catch their breath, clear minor strain, regain focus, or remove short-lived penalties.

A longer rest may allow treatment of Light Wounds, recovery of limited resources, restoration of morale, repair of gear, or reduction of fatigue.

Moderate and Severe Wounds usually require more than sleep. They may require Medicine, healing arts, surgery, magic, alchemy, psychic

restoration, sacred rites, advanced technology, or another setting-appropriate form of care.

The module defines how quickly Wounds recover and what rolls are required. The Director should consider the quality of shelter, available tools, cleanliness, food, water, safety, time pressure, and the character's condition.

Recovery is also a story opportunity. A resting Protagonist may have dreams, visions, visitors, obligations, complications, conversations with Companions, or consequences from earlier choices.

Rest should not simply erase danger unless the module is designed for fast heroic recovery. The more dangerous and grounded the setting, the more recovery should matter.

A setting module will often have its own specific rules governing recovery and healing, usually based on the skill set it has.

Advancement and Growth

The Protagonist improves through **Growth Points**, often abbreviated **GP**.

Growth Points are awarded by the Director according to the module's advancement guidelines. They may be granted at the end of a session, after completing major goals, when resolving important Clocks, after surviving dangerous journeys, when fulfilling vows, after meaningful discoveries, or when the Protagonist changes the world in a lasting way.

The exact award method may vary by campaign style, but the structure remains the same. A simple milestone method is usually best: **2 GP** for light progress, **3 GP** for strong progress and meaningful risk, and **4 GP** for major turning points, hard victories, or emotionally significant sessions. More objective-based or beat-based methods also work, provided the Director chooses one approach and sticks with it. Consistency matters more than cleverness here.

Growth Points may be spent to improve the character. The module defines the exact costs, but common uses include:

- increasing Skills (typically, +5 for 1 GP, until 75 or higher, then 2 GP);
- improving Attributes or special abilities (typically, +5 for 3 GP;
- gaining new traits (when applicable in a module);
- strengthening Companions (typically, for every **4 GP** the Protagonist spends, the Companion gains one parallel improvement, such as **+5** to a key rating, a new simple trait, or a suitable gear upgrade);
- increasing Destiny capacity (usually +1 Destiny for 3 GP);
- gaining new skills, spells, techniques, powers, contacts, or resources; such things typically cost at least 1 GP and in-game rping, while Specialist skills typically cost 2 GP and a rping event;
- improving social position, holdings, gear, or influence;
- recovering from lasting harm or resolving burdens.

Advancement should reflect play. A Protagonist who spends many sessions surviving in the wilderness may improve Survival, Awareness-based Skills, endurance, or local knowledge. A

Protagonist who studies forbidden magic may gain new occult abilities. A Protagonist who leads troops, negotiates alliances, or rules a domain may improve social, strategic, or command-related traits.

As a rule, upgrades should be applied **between sessions**, during downtime, or at a secure resting point. Mid-session improvement should be rare and only allowed when the fiction supports it—at camp, in a safe room, in a warded hideout, after a long breath and a real pause. A chase is not the moment to remember advanced bookkeeping and become better at knives by administrative miracle.

Growth should make the Protagonist more capable, but it should also deepen the story. New power brings new obligations, enemies, temptations, and consequences. In most campaigns, skills should not rise beyond **95** without special story justification. Attributes should usually remain below the **80–85** range unless the campaign is deliberately moving toward a higher-power tone.

Group Play

The One-on-One RPG System is built first for its classic structure: one Protagonist, one Director, and a story centered tightly on a single central character. However, the same core engine can also support a small group of Protagonists when a module or campaign calls for it.

Group Play is the optional rules framework for running the One-on-One RPG System with more than one Protagonist. It keeps the same underlying mechanics: d100 Tests and Contests, Advantage and Disadvantage, Degree of Success and Degree of Failure, Clocks, Destiny, Companions, Wounds, Edge, and scene-based consequence.

Nothing in this section replaces the core rules. It simply expands the camera.

In Group Play, the story becomes less about one singular fate and more about a shared struggle among several important characters. This can work extremely well, but it requires structure. Without it, the spotlight can sprawl, the loudest player can dominate scenes, and important moments can turn into long group discussions without clear action.

The purpose of these rules is to keep play focused. One Protagonist steps forward at a time. The others still matter. The scene has a clear question. The roll has consequence. The group acts together without dissolving into confusion.

Recommended Group Size

Group Play works best with **2–4 Protagonists** and one Director.

Larger groups are possible, but the more Protagonists there are, the more deliberately the Director must manage spotlight, pacing, Clocks, and decision-making. The system is not designed around large-party tactical play. It remains a focused dramatic engine, even when more than one Protagonist is present.

For most modules, the ideal Group Play size is **3 Protagonists**. This gives enough variety for teamwork while still allowing each character to matter sharply.

Shared Clocks

Group Play works best when pressure is tracked through shared Clocks rather than isolated individual failures.

If several Protagonists are attempting to sneak through a dangerous area, negotiate with a hostile faction, cross hazardous terrain, survive pursuit, hold a defensive position, or complete a difficult operation, the scene should not collapse into disconnected consequences every time one roll goes badly.

Instead, failed rolls, partial successes, delays, and costly choices should often advance a shared Clock.

Common shared Clocks include:

Alert for guards, enemies, witnesses, authorities, patrols, or hostile attention.

Pursuit for being tracked, chased, hunted, followed, or closed in on.

Supply for dwindling food, water, ammunition, fuel, ritual materials, medicine, trade goods, or other resources.

Morale for frightened followers, hirelings, allies, refugees, soldiers, retainers, or Companions.

Exposure for reputation damage, social suspicion, political danger, public scandal, or discovery.

Obligation for debts, favors, promises, faction claims, contracts, bargains, or unfinished duties.

Time for rituals, repairs, searches, travel, deadlines, collapsing structures, spreading fires, incoming enemies, or worsening weather.

Shared Clocks keep the whole table focused on the same danger. They also allow multiple Protagonists to contribute without requiring every mistake to become a separate subplot.

When a shared Clock fills, the consequence affects the group or the scene as a whole. The guards arrive. The bridge collapses. The enemy catches up. Supplies run out. The faction loses patience. The ritual completes. The opportunity passes.

Acting Together

When multiple Protagonists act toward a shared goal, use one of three basic structures: **Lead + Support**, **Parallel Actions**, or **Combined Outcome**.

These structures are not separate subsystems. They are simple ways to organize who rolls, who helps, and how consequences are judged.

Lead + Support

Lead + Support is the default structure for most group scenes.

Use Lead + Support when one Protagonist is clearly taking the main action and the others are helping. The approach is singular: one lock to open, one speech to give, one leap to make, one spell to complete, one wound to treat, one path to read, one enemy to distract, or one dangerous choice to make.

The lead Protagonist makes the decisive roll.

The supporting Protagonists may improve the lead's position, remove a problem, cancel Disadvantage, create Advantage, provide tools, protect the lead from fallout, or prepare a follow-up option.

A support action may grant Advantage if it meaningfully improves the lead's chance.

A small but useful support action may grant **+10 Advantage**.

A strong, directly relevant support action may grant **+20 Advantage**.

An exceptional support action, perfect preparation, or highly specialized contribution

may grant +**30 Advantage**, if the Director agrees the fiction supports it.

Support may also cancel equivalent Disadvantage. For example, one Protagonist might hold a lantern steady to cancel poor visibility, keep watch to cancel the risk of surprise, or brace a rope to cancel unstable footing.

If the support action is risky, uncertain, or opposed, it may require its own roll. If it is simple, competent preparation, the Director may allow it without a roll.

Lead + Support should be the standard shape of most Group Play scenes.

Parallel Actions

Parallel Actions apply when several Protagonists perform different tasks toward one shared goal.

Use Parallel Actions when the group is not all doing the same thing, but their actions are connected.

One Protagonist distracts the guards.

One opens the gate.

One studies the warding marks.

One watches the alley.

One prepares the escape route.

Each Protagonist acts separately, but all actions contribute to the same larger objective.

Parallel Actions are useful when the Director wants the group to feel competent and active without reducing the whole scene to one roll. They also help keep different character specialties relevant.

The Director should make the stakes clear before rolls are made. A failed roll might advance a shared Clock, impose a consequence on that Protagonist, increase Disadvantage for the next action, create a complication, or force the group to change plans.

Strong success on one Parallel Action may grant Advantage to another Protagonist's action, remove a complication, reduce a Clock tick, or create a new opening.

Parallel Actions work especially well for infiltration, investigation, chases, rituals, repairs, travel hazards, social events, battlefield maneuvers, and rescue scenes.

Combined Outcome

Combined Outcome applies when everyone is truly doing the same thing at the same time.

Use Combined Outcome for actions such as forcing a barricade shut, rowing against a current, holding a gate, dragging survivors from rubble, pushing a wagon free, lifting a fallen beam, reinforcing a ritual circle, or resisting a shared environmental threat.

Combined Outcome should be used sparingly. If every group problem becomes "everyone rolls until enough people succeed," the game loses tension.

When using Combined Outcome, the Director may choose one of the following methods:

Single Lead Roll: One Protagonist rolls, and the others provide Advantage through support.

Group Threshold: Each participating Protagonist rolls. The group needs a certain number of successes before a certain number of failures.

Clock Progress: Each success advances a shared Clock. Each failure advances an opposing danger Clock or adds a complication.

Best Roll with Risk: Everyone rolls, and the best success determines the result, but each failure may still create a cost.

The Director should choose the method that best fits the scene.

Combined Outcome is strongest when the whole group is visibly straining against the same danger.

Shared Spotlight

The most important rule in Group Play is **Shared Spotlight**.

In standard one-on-one play, the camera naturally stays tight on one Protagonist. In Group Play, the camera must be managed on purpose.

At the start of each session, or at the start of a major episode within a long session, establish a simple Spotlight Order. This may be seat order, an agreed list, card draw, rotating initiative, or any other clear method.

The purpose is simple: every Protagonist should have a meaningful moment of focus before the session reaches its climax.

A meaningful scene of focus is called a **Beat**.

A Beat should have risk, stakes, and consequence. Something should change because of it.

A Beat is not just a turn to speak. It is a scene or moment where one Protagonist's decision, action, roll, or sacrifice matters.

Scene Holder

Each Beat has a **Scene Holder**.

The Scene Holder is the Protagonist currently in focus. The main question of the scene belongs to them.

Can they convince the official?

Can they cross the broken bridge?

Can they keep the soldiers from breaking formation?

Can they read the ancient inscription before the chamber floods?

Can they hold the monster's attention while the others escape?

Can they resist the voice in the dark?

If a decisive roll is required, the Scene Holder usually makes it. If the scene fails, the first and sharpest consequence usually lands on them.

This preserves the One-on-One feel even in a group. One Protagonist steps forward. The world answers that Protagonist directly.

The other Protagonists still matter. They may support the Scene Holder, contain the consequences, or create a new option.

Supporting a Beat

During another Protagonist's Beat, supporting Protagonists usually contribute in one of three ways: **Setup**, **Contain**, or **Pivot**.

These options keep support clear and useful without stealing the Scene Holder's focus.

Setup

A Setup action improves the Scene Holder's chance of success.

The supporting Protagonist might identify a hidden watcher, prepare the right tool, translate a phrase, read the terrain, hold a light, block a bad angle, distract an enemy, offer the right social cue, create an opening, or provide necessary information.

If the Setup is risky or uncertain, roll for it.

If the Setup is straightforward and the Protagonist is capable, the Director may simply allow it.

A successful Setup may grant **+10 Advantage**, cancel an equivalent Disadvantage, improve the fictional position, or allow the Scene Holder to attempt something that would otherwise be impossible.

A strong Setup may grant **+20 Advantage** if the contribution is especially direct and meaningful.

An exceptional Setup may grant **+30 Advantage** only when the supporting action is highly relevant, risky, well-executed, or perfectly suited to the problem.

Setup should not become automatic bonus stacking. The support must matter in the fiction.

Contain

A Contain action keeps failure from becoming collapse.

The supporting Protagonist might steady a witness, hold a defensive line, drag an ally clear, buy time, keep a vehicle from overturning, stop a panic, prevent evidence from being destroyed, keep a crowd from surging, or block an enemy follow-up.

Contain usually matters when the Scene Holder fails or suffers a costly partial result.

A successful Contain action may reduce a consequence, prevent an extra Clock tick, preserve key gear, protect a Companion, redirect harm, allow retreat, or keep a bad result from becoming worse.

Contain does not erase failure. It limits the damage.

Pivot

A Pivot action creates a new option.

The supporting Protagonist does not improve the current plan directly. Instead, they reveal or create another way forward.

A Pivot might identify a second exit, spot a hidden mechanism, recognize an old symbol, discover a weakness, notice an enemy's hesitation, realize a route is unsafe, expose a lie, remember a useful law, or find a way to change the terms of the scene.

A Pivot does not always grant a numerical bonus. Its value is structural. It changes what the group can choose next.

Use Pivot when the current approach is failing, too costly, or incomplete.

Spotlight Tokens

For tables that want a clear fairness tool, each Protagonist begins the session with **1 Spotlight Token**.

A player may spend a Spotlight Token during another Protagonist's Beat when their support genuinely matters.

A Spotlight Token may be spent for one of the following effects.

Make It Count

Turn a meaningful Setup into a clear **+10 Advantage** or cancel an equivalent Disadvantage, if the fiction supports it.

This option is useful when a supporting action matters but might otherwise be overlooked.

Hold the Cost

If the Scene Holder fails, the supporting Protagonist takes one defined consequence instead.

This may mean taking the wound, drawing the suspicion, accepting the obligation, being recognized, losing the item, becoming separated, suffering the condition, or attracting the enemy's attention.

The consequence must fit the scene.

Cutaway Reveal

Introduce one small but important truth discovered in the moment.

This might be a hidden latch, a familiar insignia, a second route, a structural weakness, a forgotten custom, a coded mark, a nearby witness, or a clue that changes the group's options.

The reveal must fit the fiction. It cannot contradict established facts, erase consequences, or solve the whole scene by itself.

Spotlight Tokens refresh at the start of the next session or major episode.

Spotlight Tokens do not replace Destiny. Destiny remains personal and powerful. Spotlight Tokens are a fairness and ensemble tool. They make sure support is visible, useful, and rewarded.

Destiny in Group Play

Destiny remains personal, not pooled.

Each Protagonist has their own Destiny and spends it on their own decisive moments.

This distinction matters. If Destiny becomes a shared group resource, individual Protagonists can lose some of their dramatic weight. Personal Destiny reinforces the idea that each character has their own fate, risks, and defining moments.

The Scene Holder may spend Destiny when the camera is focused on them.

Supporting Protagonists may use Setup, Contain, Pivot, and Spotlight Tokens to influence the scene without taking over the Scene Holder's role.

A supporting Protagonist may spend Destiny on their own support roll if that roll is significant, risky, and personally consequential. The Director should allow this when the supporting action has real stakes.

Destiny should still be used for moments that matter. It should not become a routine group modifier.

Companions in Group Play

Companions should be handled carefully in Group Play.

In standard one-on-one play, a Companion can provide important support without overcrowding the story. In Group Play, too many Companions can slow the game, dilute the spotlight, and turn the table into a large cast-management exercise.

Use one of the following approaches.

Shared Companion

The group has one notable Companion attached to the whole party.

This is the cleanest method for most Group Play. The Shared Companion may Assist, Screen, or Anchor when appropriate, but does not belong exclusively to one Protagonist unless the module says otherwise.

Personal Companions

Each Protagonist may have one Companion.

This works best with very small groups. It should usually be the upper limit. If every Protagonist has multiple Companions, scenes can become crowded quickly.

Companion as Asset

Lesser followers, pets, guards, guides, hirelings, assistants, crew, or attendants may be treated as assets rather than full Companions.

An asset may grant situational Advantage, absorb a minor consequence, carry gear, hold position, help advance a Clock, or provide access to a specific capability.

Assets do not require equal camera time. They matter when relevant, then return to the background.

Companions should still be meaningful, but they should not overwhelm the Protagonists.

Growth in Group Play

Group Play uses the same Growth Point rules as standard play.

The total Growth Point award for the session should remain stable. More players should not automatically mean faster advancement.

At the end of a session, determine the total Growth Point award normally, according to the module's advancement guidelines. Then distribute that award based on meaningful Beats, important choices, consequences carried, and contributions that changed play.

A meaningful Beat is a scene or moment with real stakes. It should include at least one of the following:

- a declared roll with meaningful consequence;
- an irreversible choice;
- a major cost accepted;
- a Clock advanced, completed, or prevented;
- a serious risk taken;
- a personal goal pursued;
- a discovery that changes the direction of play;
- a scene that significantly affects another Protagonist, Companion, faction, enemy, or location.

The Scene Holder of a meaningful Beat usually earns the Primary Share.

A supporting Protagonist whose action clearly changed the outcome may earn a Secondary Share.

A Protagonist who absorbed or carried the major consequence may earn a Cost Share.

The Director should keep the total award within the normal session range. Spotlight structure should not become a point farm.

Advancement should remain fair, but not mechanical in a narrow way. Reward meaningful play, risk, consequence, and contribution.

Director Guidance for Group Play

Group Play works best when each Beat has a clear question, a clear Scene Holder, and at least two obvious ways for the rest of the group to contribute.

Avoid framing scenes as "everyone talks until something happens."

Frame scenes around specific dramatic questions.

Can one Protagonist win the official's trust?

Can another keep the crowd calm?

Can another identify whether the map is false?

Can another hold the bridge long enough for the others to cross?

Can another find a second route before the enemy arrives?

The group should feel like a band of capable individuals, not a committee waiting for the safest consensus.

Keep the camera moving.

Keep the stakes personal.

Keep shared Clocks visible.

Let one Protagonist step forward at a time.

Let the others make that step survivable.

That is the heart of Group Play: several Protagonists sharing one dangerous story while each still receives moments that feel sharp, personal, and consequential.

Using This Chapter in Setting Modules

This Rules Reference is intended to remain stable across modules. A setting book may rename certain terms, add new Skills, provide archetypes, define Essence differently, alter gear, introduce special combat options, or add genre-specific subsystems. However, the core remains the same:

Characters are built from Attributes, Skills, Destiny, and setting-specific features.

Skills begin from half their linked Attribute, rounded down.

The Protagonist receives 200 Skill Points during creation.

The standard starting Skill cap is 70%.

Resolution uses d100 rolls against a modified Attribute or Skill value.

Skill tests begin at half of their value before applying any modifiers.

Advantage and Disadvantage use +10, +20, and +30.

Destiny modifies rolls by +10 or −10 per point.

DoS and DoF measure how strongly rolls succeed or fail.

Contests compare opposed results.

Lesser Wins keep failed exchanges moving.

Clocks track extended progress and danger.

Combat uses the same core procedure, with Edge, Wounds, Control, and consequences.

Growth Points advance the Protagonist over time.

A module should focus most of its space on what makes its world unique: cultures, conflicts, magic, powers, enemies, places, archetypes, equipment, adventures, and tone. The mechanics and rules here provide the common foundation so each new setting can be played quickly, clearly, and consistently.

Undine: The Drowned Realms

Player Character Record Sheet

Character Overview

Name: _____
Bloodtide: _____
Archetype: _____
Companion: _____

Native Depth: _____
Cultural Trait: _____
Background / Notes: _____

Core Values / Trackers

Essence: Current _____ / Maximum _____

Destiny: ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

AR: _____ Money / Shells: _____

Wounds

Light	Moderate	Severe	Condition / Notes:
☐	☐	☐	

Primary Attributes

Might	Grace	Endurance

Awareness	Intellect	Presence

Derived Notes

Skills

Skill Name	Base	Final / %	Notes	Skill Name	Base	Final / %	Notes

Combat

Weapon / Attack	Damage	Range	Notes

Armor / Shield: _____

Combat Notes:

Magic

☐ Formal Magic ☐ Wild Magic

Spell / Working Known	Essence Cost	Notes

Equipment

Item	Type	Qty	Notes

Companion / Mount Notes

Name: _____
Type: _____
Bond / Role: _____
Abilities / Traits: _____
Notes: _____

9. Notes / Traits

Traits, Mutations, Special Abilities, Contacts, Story Notes, and anything else important to your journey in the Drowned Realms.

THE DROWNED REALMS
BENEATH THE TIDE, LEGENDS ENDURE.
SUNLIT SKIN
1. THE CORAL COURTS
Reef Realm of the Bloodtide Courts
THE DROWNED CROWN
Ancient Ruin
6. THE RAYROADS
Realm of the Leviathan-Tide Peoples
PEARLSPIRE
MANTLEWAKE
Great Gathering of the Rayroads
MOON-JELLY SHOALS
Hazardous Open Water
REDBLOOM REEF
Infected Reef
2. THE GREENWAYS
Kelp Forests of the Kelpway Clans
THE NINE SPIRES
Ancient Ruin
BLUE REALMS
4. THE VAULTWATERS
Arkborn Cities among Sunken Domes
ROOTSONG DRIFT
Seasonal Gathering
DIM ROADS
ARKSPIRE
3. THE BASTION MARCHES
Shellhold Bastion of the Bloodtide Defenders
KARTH SHELLHOLD
SUNKING VAULTS
Ancient Ruin
5. THE BLACK REACHES
Abyssal Kin of the Deep
GLOAMDEEP
GLASS FIELDS
Vent and Mineral Zone
THALASSOR'S BONES
Leviathan Grave Site
BLACKFIN REACH
LEGEND
City
Gathering Site
Ancient Ruin
Dangerous Region
Chasm
N
W
E
S
WORLD-EEL SCAR
Mythic Deep Trench
ULTHARUUN'S RIFT
Forbidden Chasm
HADAL WOUNDS